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Thursday, 19 March 2009, 3 p.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Shalgham	(Libyan Arab Jamahiriya)
Members:	Austria	Mr. Mayr-Harting
	Burkina Faso	Mr. Kafando
	China	Mr. Liu Zhenmin
	Costa Rica	Mr. Urbina
	Croatia	Mr. Jurica
	France	Mr. Ripert
	Japan	Mr. Takasu
	Mexico	Mr. Heller
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Turkey	Mr. İlkin
	Uganda	Mr. Rugunda
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir John Sawers
	United States of America	Ms. DiCarlo
	Viet Nam	Mr. Bui The Giang

Agenda

The situation in Afghanistan

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (S/2009/135)

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09-27354 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Afghanistan

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (S/2009/135)

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Afghanistan, Australia, Canada, the Czech Republic, Germany, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway and Pakistan, in which they request to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the consideration of the item, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Tanin (Afghanistan) took a seat at the Council table; the representatives of the other aforementioned countries took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Kai Eide, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan.

It is so decided.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2009/135, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear a briefing by Mr. Kai Eide, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan. I now give him the floor.

Mr. Eide: I will start with some developments that are not frequently reported and do not receive the public attention that they deserve. Nonetheless, they are important if we are to form a more complete picture of developments in Afghanistan.

First, after all the changes that have taken place over the past few months, the Afghan Government today is better and more competent than ever before and the quality of provincial governance is better.

Secondly, cooperation among key elements inside the Government has improved; that applies most prominently to the security ministries and institutions. And the results are clear. We see an enhanced ability to uncover terrorist networks and to prevent attacks from taking place. Yes, there have been some spectacular terrorist attacks in Kabul, but the overall number of attacks in the capital has gone down, not least because of this improved coordination. In addition, the economic ministries are working in a more coherent manner following changes in the leadership of the ministries of Finance, Agriculture and Commerce. That should enable the Government to develop more unified economic policies.

Thirdly, these changes have enabled the Government to better address some of our long-standing concerns. Let me just mention a few of them.

With regard to the police, a comprehensive reform effort is under way to strengthen and clean up the police force. That should lead to a more efficient fight against the insurgency, greater respect for the rule of law and an enhanced ability to fight corruption. A significant number of police officers have been removed and are being prosecuted.

A national agricultural strategy will be launched in April. It will include all the major sectors of agriculture and establish pool funding for donors. The main objectives are, of course, to increase agricultural production, to develop marketing capabilities and to enhance rural employment.

The new team in the Ministry of Commerce is addressing the challenges of private-sector development: the establishment of a legal framework, the setting of

investment promotion priorities, licensing reform and trade and transit agreements with neighbouring countries. And let me remind members that police, agriculture and private-sector development have all suffered from neglect for years. They are now being addressed as priority areas.

Fourthly, the improved internal cohesion that we now see emerging in the Government will help us to overcome the fragmentation that has so far hampered coordination with the international community. A stronger Afghan counterpart will allow us to make better use of the main coordination body, the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board.

Fifthly, the prognosis for poppy cultivation in 2009 indicates that there is the potential for a very significant decline in production across the country. We could see a further increase in the number of poppy-free provinces, as well as serious reductions in poppy production in the South. That could be a turning point in our counter-narcotics efforts.

Those developments represent potential success stories. However, I underline the word "potential" because our ability to turn them into reality will, to a large extent, depend on the ability of the international community to respond quickly with support. There is a need to provide trainers, mentors and equipment to the police. There is a need to adjust and strengthen agricultural assistance with a view to responding flexibly to new priorities and new programmes. There is a need to provide support for governors who are determined to make their provinces poppy-free and to farmers who are ready to switch from poppy to licit crops.

If we could succeed in those areas, then we would truly live up to the commitments that we all undertook in Paris in June last year. And, for the first time, we would be able to seriously address some of our most serious, most long-standing and deepest concerns: fighting corruption and crime, reducing the flow of financial resources to the insurgency and improving food security.

There are no quick fixes; it will take time. But, for the first time in many years, there have been promising developments. If we do not respond quickly, then we may well face new stagnation and even backlash in several of these sectors. That we cannot afford. Progress in each of them will contribute to political stability and economic growth and be a critical component of any international exit strategy.

Of course, the main credit for this progress goes to prominent Afghan politicians and officials. However, it would not have been possible without the presence and commitment of the international community, civilian as well as military. So this is not a time to waver; it is a time to remain committed.

These positive trends are so often overshadowed by dramatic events and political developments — at this point, mainly the security situation and the intense debate about the presidential and provincial elections. Yes, the security situation has deteriorated over the past few months. A mild winter provided a suitable environment for maintaining high levels of violence, and an early Ramadan allowed for a prolonged fighting season. As a result, the overall number of security incidents in December 2008 rose by 42 per cent compared with that in the previous December; in January 2009, it was 75 per cent higher than in January 2008. As I mentioned, the number of incidents in Kabul has gone down, owing partly to the improved performance of Afghan security forces, but we have to expect an intense fighting season, starting only a few weeks from now.

The election process has, of course, taken centre stage in our efforts and has also been at the centre of attention in the media. We now have an agreement on the election date, 20 August, which means that we can plan, from a financial, procurement, organization, training and security point of view, on the basis of a firm deadline. The main challenge now is, of course, how to resolve the dispute regarding what will happen between 22 May, when the current presidential term ends according to the Constitution, and the beginning of the next presidential term.

Our message to Afghan politicians and to the opposition is clear. They must reach a political consensus that ensures the legitimacy and strength of Afghan institutions until the next presidential inauguration. Reaching such a consensus is a matter of vital political interest. Such consensus has been reached in the past when national interests were considered to be at stake. But when leaders have failed to reach a national consensus, we know that the costs for the country have been very high.

The international community has 70,000 troops in Afghanistan operating alongside Afghan forces today. Billions of dollars are invested. The summer months represent the peak of the fighting season. We cannot

afford to see these months become a period of political and constitutional instability. We need a Government and we need institutions that can continue their work with full strength and broad legitimacy.

We also have a message for the Government. The opposition has concerns that are real and well-founded. They relate to the transparency and fairness of the election process. The Afghan Government must demonstrate that it is ready to do its utmost to reassure the opposition that elections will be fair and transparent and that the resources of incumbency will not be misused.

Finally, there is a message for the international community. We must also do our outmost to establish mechanisms with the very same objectives — transparency and fairness — in cooperation with the Afghan authorities and civil society. I urge those who have been invited to send international observers — the European Union and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe — to play their parts fully alongside domestic observation efforts. The United Nations and the Independent Electoral Commission will establish an election complaints commission, which will be as robust as possible under current circumstances. A media complaint commission will be established and the United Nations and the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission will monitor respect for political rights.

All involved — the Government, the opposition and the international community — must understand the costs of a flawed and unfair election process. The result would be prolonged political instability when stability is required more than ever. The result would create doubt in the minds of many Afghans about the value of democratic processes when confidence is needed.

Civil-military cooperation is an important part of our mandate. The relationship between the International Security Assistance Force and the United Nations Mission has continued to improve. Together with the Afghan Government, we have come a long way now in formulating the integrated approach that we have been talking about for years. The aim is simple: to allocate our overall resources — civilian and military — in a way that would allow us to make the best possible use of them; to strengthen development efforts where they can proceed unhindered; and to provide a better basis of governance in swing districts, gradually attracting more civilian development where such efforts have so far been difficult. We must learn to work together in a different way than in the past.

The United Nations has taken a lead in addressing civilian casualties and military behaviour that does not adequately respect Afghan cultural sensitivities. This follows from our obligation to protect and promote human rights, but our engagement is also motivated by the need to ensure strong Afghan support for a continued international engagement. We have seen how serious incidents have not only affected support for the international military forces, but have also made the humanitarian and development community more vulnerable. The number of civilian casualties rose by 40 per cent last year, with the insurgency clearly accounting for the majority of such casualties.

I am pleased to see that the commander of international forces, General McKiernan — to whom I pay tribute — is addressing this problem so strongly and convincingly in his instructions to the troops: to minimize the use of air power; to improve coordination with Afghan security forces, giving them the lead where possible; and to respect, as I said, the cultural sensitivities of the Afghan population.

President Karzai has expressed his views strongly and repeatedly. These are views shared by many Afghans, and they are being listened to and addressed. Unfortunately, I must add, insurgency groups continue their indiscriminate and deliberate attacks on civilians.

I understand those who say that an increased troop level may reduce the requirements to use airpower and lead to a lower number of civilian casualties, but we should also admit the danger of the opposite happening. Additional troops will mean more fighting, and that is the purpose. With more troops and frequent troop rotations, the international military forces must ensure that they operate in a way that solidifies both the support of the Afghan public and of public opinion in troop-contributing countries.

Inadequate donor coordination is a major concern to all of us and a priority element of our mandate. We have made progress in some areas. I believe political coordination is better than before. With regard to donor coordination, the picture is more complex and perhaps less encouraging. There have, in recent months, been a number of discussions of policy-shaping, which I hope will eventually turn into policymaking. Furthermore, some countries are channelling more resources through national programmes and the Afghan budget. But I

continue to have serious worries, as Council members are aware, about a number of our practices.

First, we must, as much as possible, move away from the use of contractors, who are often overpaid and underqualified, whose aim is to finish projects quickly before they move on to the next. The short-term costs of such development policies are high and the long-term impact is low. We must be better at measuring our achievements in terms of impact, cost-effectiveness and effect on capacity-building.

Secondly, I know that some Council members are tired of this, but I come back to what I have called the donor-generated fragmentation of Afghanistan. I understand the need to build where you fight, but the balance is wrong and getting worse, despite constant warnings, agreed commitments and urging by Afghan authorities. An increasing number of donors are taking an increasingly province-based perspective of Afghanistan. A shared nationwide perspective is required. If the current trends are not corrected, then I fear turbulence where there is today stability, as well as an increasing inability to implement national programmes.

Thirdly, where possible, the international military should channel development resources through civilian authorities and institutions — preferably Afghan — rather than do the development work themselves. I would recommend that all Provincial Reconstruction Teams channel, wherever possible, development resources through often underfunded but successful mechanisms, such as the National Solidarity Programme. That would make projects less expensive and more sustainable, and it would enhance the position of the Afghan Government in the eyes of its public.

Fourthly, I now believe that the use of an amount of between $500 million and $1 billion is never reported to the Afghan Government. Consequently, the Afghan Government does not know — and we do not know — how much is being spent across the country and for what purposes. As a result of the lack of coordination and transparency, large portions of the National Development Strategy will go unfunded. The majority by far of all aid is spent outside the control of the Government, and any attempt to influence how it is spent is hampered by an extraordinarily complex international donor system.

With the assistance of the World Bank, we will soon set up a new, comprehensive and easily accessible database at the Ministries of the Economy and Finance. I urge all donors to make full use of it. So many donors I meet underline the importance of better coordination, but so few, I must say, show a readiness to modify their practices. Those practices have brought us into the state of fragmentation and confusion in which we still find ourselves.

The United Nations will also set up a new peer review mechanism, the purpose of which will be to bring together donors in certain priority areas so as to ensure that they are not duplicating, but complementing, each other, and that they have a strategic perspective in accordance with the plans of the Afghan Government. This initiative is supported by the Afghan Government itself and by main donors.

I have mentioned the need to focus more on capacity- and institution-building, which is one of our priorities. It is the most important element in building Afghanistan, and it is the most important element of an international exit strategy. It has worked well in building the Afghan army and it is starting to work well in building the police. Why is that so? It is so primarily because there are national programmes. It is not enough to send people. So often we have seen how a supply-based as opposed to a need-based approach has failed. Often, I must admit, I have wondered whose capacity is being built — the capacity of foreign experts or of the Afghan institutions.

I firmly believe that a massive — I repeat, massive — capacity- and institution-building programme is required. It must be at the top of our priorities. This includes ensuring that, wherever possible, capacity-building is an integrated part of every development project. It includes a more strategic approach to education and the building of institutions at a national and at a subnational level. I am talking about the security institutions, the judicial institutions, ministries and provincial and district administrations.

But success will depend on the following aspects. We must formulate a national vision and national programmes: a fragmented and piecemeal approach will not work. Programmes should include qualified people, the technical assets required and financial resources. Afghan ownership must be ensured. And capacity-building should, where possible, include both training and mentorship. Capacity- and institution-building is not the kind of activity that lends itself to ribbon-cutting events or to photo opportunities. But it

is the most critical element in enabling the Afghans to run their own affairs.

Let me illustrate why I insist on more strategic and long-term thinking. Recently I had a meeting with the Minister of Education, the Minister of Higher Education and the Minister of Labour and Social Affairs. They are all responsible for education of all sorts, including vocational training. They told me that very, very soon millions of young girls and boys will complete their secondary education — millions. That is good news. But there is very limited capacity to absorb them into higher education. Only 4 per cent of them will be able to move on to vocational training. If this is not soon corrected, Afghanistan will not be able to make use of its intellectual resources, and the potential for economic growth will be significantly limited. The private sector will not have the qualified and educated people it needs.

The readiness of donors to provide primary education is very encouraging. One country is building 200 schools in its own province — I say "its own" because it has a Provincial Reconstruction Team there. But the neighbouring province lacks anything resembling this type of generosity. And resources for higher education and vocational training in the same provinces are very scarce. So now is a time for strategy and policy reviews. I therefore welcome those reviews that are under way and believe that they can re-energize our common effort in a meaningful way at a critical moment.

However, I would also emphasize that we have set priorities — we have agreed on them, in Paris and elsewhere. The main problem is our limited readiness to implement our priorities — to implement what we have agreed on — and to be flexible enough to respond to changes and to have a strategic, nationwide perspective in our work.

I have touched upon our human rights mandate in terms of civilian casualties, as well as the election process. Allow me only to mention two other areas that I believe are important and need our full attention: the rights of women in Afghan society and freedom of expression.

I have been disturbed by recent reports of violence against women and brutal rape cases. The Mission and I are speaking out consistently against such phenomena, against the marginalization of women in Afghan society, against the prevailing atmosphere of impunity, and against the lack of access to the court system and to adequate health facilities. Afghanistan is today the only country in the world where the average life expectancy for women is much lower than that for men.

And we are speaking out to promote the education of women and their ability to take part in Afghan society. It is a matter of human rights, but it is also a matter of making full use of the entire Afghan population in building the country. Afghanistan cannot afford to keep 50 per cent of its population marginalized. There are women in prominent positions today, but they are few. Many more are needed to serve as role models for the young female population and to use their resources for the benefit of their country.

We have also constantly raised the question of freedom of expression, which is always important, but even more so when an election campaign is approaching.

When I last addressed the Security Council, I was deeply concerned about the humanitarian situation and the prospects of starvation occurring in large parts of the country. That danger has not passed. But so far the winter has not brought the humanitarian crisis that many of us feared. The prospects for the next harvest seem to be better than last year. In the middle of April we will be better able to assess the situation and the prospects than we are today.

Over the next few months, there will be several conferences on the regional dimension of our work. I very much welcome this wider focus. I hope that these various conferences can be prepared in a way that turns them into a process rather than a series of separate events.

The improved relationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan is encouraging. None of us underestimates the challenges and the need to support this new relationship, as illustrated by the appointment of so many special envoys for Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The potential for regional cooperation is indeed impressive. It ranges from huge infrastructure projects that bring the wider region together to small-scale cooperation in agriculture. The meeting in Paris in December served to mobilize the attention and interest of donors. As a follow-up to the Paris meeting, experts met in Brussels two days ago to identify priority projects in preparation for the regional economic

cooperation conference in Islamabad. We are, I believe, moving from a declaratory phase to an operational phase. Already, the new electricity supply from Uzbekistan to Kabul through other cities in Afghanistan is a visible sign of the value of regional cooperation.

I am convinced that in economic cooperation as well as in capacity-building, all neighbouring countries could and should play a significant role. For instance, agricultural experts from neighbouring countries know Afghanistan, know the climate, know the language and in addition to that are less expensive than experts from Western countries or elsewhere. They represent a significant untapped resource that should be mobilized.

I have always insisted that military means alone cannot bring an end to the conflict. A political process will ultimately be needed. However, we should not believe that such a process of reconciliation can be a shortcut to peace or a replacement for other efforts to build Afghanistan. Reconciliation is not a substitute, but an indispensable final component.

Furthermore, a peace process will never succeed if the Government and the international community do not have confidence in themselves. We must address reconciliation in a way that projects strength and conviction and not weakness and doubt. If we do not have confidence in ourselves then the Afghan people will not have confidence in us and in their own future. That would damage any reconciliation process.

I am coming to the end of my speech. In a few days time, all of us and many more will meet in The Hague. It will not be a donor conference. It will be a political manifestation of support and commitment. My hope is that the conference will provide new energy and shared readiness not to re-examine all our agreed priorities, but to demonstrate readiness to implement them and to use our resources in a flexible and coordinated way. For me, the Hague Conference is a test of political will. It is an occasion to push aside the doom-and-gloom atmosphere, roll up our sleeves and support the positive trends that we now see emerging in Afghanistan.

And let us all avoid the impression that we are discussing what to do about Afghanistan. We must discuss what we can do together with the Afghans. If they feel that a debate is going on somewhere out there about them — and not with them — then we will deeply offend their sense of dignity and ownership. That sense of ownership is critical to the strength of the Government in the eyes of its public, to its confidence in itself and, ultimately, to our success in defeating the insurgency.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Mr. Eide for his briefing and for the comprehensive report.

I will now give the floor to Council members.

Mr. Rugunda (Uganda): I wish to thank Mr. Kai Eide, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan and head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), for his comprehensive, down-to-earth and compelling briefing on the situation in Afghanistan.

It will be recalled that during his last briefing to Council, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General outlined key benchmarks which he hoped UNAMA would meet in six months. These included specific criteria to measure aid effectiveness, strengthening the Government's mechanisms for combating corruption, determining the kind of police force required, designing an agricultural reform programme and improving the Pakistan-Afghanistan relationship.

We would like to commend UNAMA for its important role in promoting peace and stability in Afghanistan. UNAMA has spearheaded the efforts of the international community, in conjunction with the Government of Afghanistan, in rebuilding the country and strengthening the foundations of peace and constitutional democracy. We know it is not an easy task that UNAMA has, but the Special Representative and his staff should be commended for pressing on with the implementation of UNAMA's mandate.

We have noted in the report before us (S/2009/135) the serious challenges in Afghanistan, but there has also been some progress. We commend the Government and people of Afghanistan and the international community for their tireless efforts.

We welcome the upcoming elections that have shaped and dominated the political landscape in the country. We note the decision of the Independent Electoral Commission to extend presidential elections to 20 August 2009, and we note that this may continue to elicit mixed reactions. Uganda encourages a smooth and transparent electoral process, which we believe is a cornerstone of long-term stability. As the country

prepares for the August presidential and parliamentary elections, every effort must be made to ensure that calm and stability prevail in Afghanistan. Reconciliation among Afghans of all shades of opinion should be seen to be an important component of an inclusive political process beyond elections.

We are concerned by the serious security situation in Afghanistan today. The security situation has continued to deteriorate, with the civilian population bearing the brunt of the causalities. Security remains key to progress in all areas of Afghanistan. We welcome the integrated approach that is being put in place by the international community and the Government of Afghanistan to ensure a more coherent and effective use of civilian and military resources. More efforts have to be made to protect the civilian population from attacks.

We also believe that, at the regional level, the Government of Afghanistan, with the support of the international community, should find a way to involve regional stakeholders in a comprehensive regional security strategy. We therefore welcome the joint declaration on bilateral cooperation, signed in January with Pakistan, as a significant step forward.

It is necessary for the rule of law to be sufficiently institutionalized in order to ensure long-term peace and stability in Afghanistan. We urge the Government to effectively address those issues which are undermining the legitimacy of Afghan law enforcement and judicial institutions, but which also erode people's confidence in Government and public institutions. The Government will require increased support from the international community in institution-building, rather than pushing quick fixes. We welcome the report that the drug eradication campaign, conducted by the Government with support from the international community, has yielded some positive results. However, with poverty still overwhelming, any long-term solution would, among other things, have to address alternative sources of income for those who, driven by poverty, indulge in the drug trade.

The briefing has shown that Afghanistan still faces social and economic challenges that require a holistic approach. Durable peace and stability in Afghanistan will be achieved faster after tangible results have been achieved in governance, rule of law, respect for human rights and economic recovery and development. It is therefore important that resources are used in a coordinated and comprehensive way to empower Afghans to bear responsibility for their future.

Uganda urges the international community to fully align their efforts behind the financing and implementation of the agreed development strategies by delivering assistance in a coordinated way and increasingly through the national budget. We call on the Government of Afghanistan to play its role and make progress in strengthening institutions and introducing accountability mechanisms to provide the international community with the confidence to commit more assistance to the ongoing effort.

If our joint endeavours in Afghanistan are to succeed, it is imperative that UNAMA has the necessary resources to fulfil its mandate. We therefore urge the international community, and the United Nations Member States in particular, to support UNAMA in its efforts to rebuild Afghanistan. In this regard, we fully support the renewal of UNAMA's mandate.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are grateful to Mr. Kai Eide for his work and for the frank and exhaustive analysis of the situation in Afghanistan and for his presentation of the Secretary-General's regular report.

We are seriously concerned that, despite the efforts of the Afghan authorities and the international military presence, the security situation in the country continues to deteriorate. The terrorist activities of the Taliban, Al-Qaida and other extremists, whose activities undermine the foundations of Afghan State structures and statehood and hamper the process of stabilization and recovery, are steadily increasing. A special concern arises from the fact that terrorists practically control a whole set of regions of Afghanistan, on whose territory they are setting up parallel organs of power. Today, as never before, it is important that Afghan power structures and the international military presence jointly reverse the negative security situation.

Russia backs the activities of the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan, implemented on the basis of the mandate entrusted to it by the Security Council. Our practical contribution to these efforts is the implementation of agreements with NATO regarding transit through Russian territory of

non-military supplies for foreign military contingents in Afghanistan. In the last few days, along the North Route, the first shipment of our supplies was delivered in Kabul.

In the context of armed conflict with the Taliban, there is serious concern at the continuing instances of deaths among the peaceful population as a result of the operations of the foreign military presence. We view the agreement between NATO and Afghanistan's Ministry of Defence on coordinating counter-terrorist activities as an important step in preventing new indiscriminate strikes.

We share the assessment of the Secretary-General in his report that this year will be decisive for Afghanistan as a result of the presidential and provincial elections planned for August. The upcoming ballot is especially important to make the democratic changes and the development of State institutions sustainable. We hope that the United Nations Mission will, as in previous years, fully support the election process.

The successful conduct of elections will undoubtedly create additional opportunities for promoting national reconciliation in Afghanistan. We remain convinced that this process, including taking into account the momentum of the military-political situation in the country, must be implemented in strict compliance with Security Council resolution 1267 (1999), which concerns the anti-Taliban sanctions regime. Any attempts to flirt with extremists involved in war crimes and gradually place them in power are fraught with further destabilization.

Despite recent positive successes in countering the Afghan drugs threat, the joint counter-narcotics efforts must be further increased. That is especially pressing, as drugs trafficking remains one of the main sources of financing for terrorists.

Our country is actively backing the fight against the Afghan drugs threat implemented at various levels. At the beginning of this week, during the visit to Kabul of Russia's Minister for Foreign Affairs, Sergey Lavrov, we signed a Russian-Afghan intergovernmental agreement on cooperation in the fight against the illicit trafficking in narcotic substances. We are convinced that the implementation of that agreement will enable us to step up joint efforts between Russia and Afghanistan to counter drug-related crime.

We believe that in the fight against terrorism, drug trafficking and organized crime there is a need to fully utilize regional organizations, which have shown their effectiveness in the work in this field. These include, for example, the Collective Security Treaty Organization and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Strengthening the counter-narcotics and anti-terrorist security around the Afghan State will enable us not only to significantly weaken the financing of extremists but also to achieve rapid stabilization in Afghanistan and in the region as a whole.

We expect that a significant political impulse to deal with the aforementioned tasks will be provided by the convening in Moscow on 27 March of a special conference on Afghanistan under the aegis of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. We are grateful to the United Nations Secretary-General for his readiness to participate in that meeting.

We back the proposal of the Secretary-General to extend the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan for another 12 months. It is important that the United Nations continue to play a central role in coordinating international efforts for a post-conflict settlement in and the socio-economic recovery of Afghanistan.

Russia is interested in turning Afghanistan into a democratic, stable and flourishing State. We have promoted that objective with practical actions. With the assistance of our country, over 140 facilities in the fields of industry, infrastructure, transport and communications have been set up. In other fields, including the training of professional staff, joint projects are being undertaken today. Russia provides the friendly Afghan people with humanitarian assistance, and we will continue that assistance.

Mr. Takasu (Japan): I wish first to thank Special Representative Kai Eide for his very interesting briefing this afternoon. A year ago in this Chamber, the Council discussed the need for strong leadership for the United Nations Mission in Afghanistan and welcomed Mr. Eide's appointment. The Council then identified the priorities for the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and gave it a stronger role in coordinating the international efforts in the country. We highly appreciate the efforts of Mr. Eide and the dedicated staff of UNAMA, and wish to assure them of our strong support.

When we look at the situation in Afghanistan, we tend to see the glass as half empty. We should recognize, however, that steady progress has been made in the face of daunting challenges. To name but a few positive steps during the reporting period, we have seen improvements in civil-military coordination, a continued decrease in poppy production, and renewed momentum in the reform of the police and the Ministry of Interior. Mr. Eide referred to many other positive developments.

Acknowledging such progress by no means suggests that we can afford to slacken our pace; rather, we must redouble our efforts in order to focus on the serious challenges, in particular improving the security situation and strengthening the national security capacity. In addressing those challenges, the international community and the Afghan Government must coordinate closely with one another, with a strong emphasis on ownership by the Government and people of Afghanistan.

For the past few months, many Governments have been reviewing strategies to explore how we can best assist Afghanistan. Many of them, including Japan, have appointed special representatives for assistance to Afghanistan and Pakistan to coordinate and discuss the way forward with other partners from the perspective of the regional approach and to address Afghanistan and the neighbouring area as a whole in a comprehensive context. Those moves are welcome, as they reflect the continuing and ever-growing commitment of the international community to the stability of Afghanistan.

In this context, we welcome the forthcoming international conference on Afghanistan on 31 March, to be hosted by the United Nations, opened by the Secretary-General and chaired by the Special Representative, together with the Governments of Afghanistan and the Netherlands. We hope that the conference will provide an opportunity for countries concerned to share their strategies and agree on the future course of common action. I am certain that, at the conference, the essential role of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in coordinating the efforts of international actors on the ground will be stressed in order to formulate common strategy.

The most important political event of the year is the presidential election. It is crucial that the upcoming elections be successful in order to consolidate peace and democracy in Afghanistan. We are pleased that the registration process was conducted smoothly, and we pay tribute to the efforts and decisions of the authorities and people of the country. We must ensure that the entire electoral process is fair, smooth and credible, with the widest possible popular participation and observed by international monitors. We respect the prudent choice of the Afghan people and are confident that the Special Representative will make himself available to provide necessary advice and support.

In discussing the strategy, the regional dimension is an important factor. Afghanistan's stability and prosperity hinge upon the stability of its neighbours, such as Pakistan and Central Asian countries. Japan is pleased to host a meeting of the friends of democratic Pakistan group and the Pakistan donors conference in Tokyo in mid-April. The international community should spare no effort in supporting the region as a whole, politically as well as financially.

As we enter a critical phase for the future of Afghanistan, Japan is committed to remaining a staunch supporter of the country's endeavours. To steadily implement the pledge of $2 billion we made in Paris and to meet the urgent needs of Afghanistan, we will disburse $300 million by the end of this month, including in support of the presidential election and assistance equivalent to six months' salary for all 80,000 Afghan police officers to meet the pressing need for police reform.

I agree with the Special Representative that stability cannot take root without economic development and capacity-building. To that end, Japan has assisted in the construction of infrastructure, including more than 650 kilometres of roads and the recently opened terminal building of Kabul International Airport. Japan places priority on agriculture and rural development. We have also prioritized education, as noted by the Special Representative, and the results of our support include the construction or restoration of 500 schools and the training of 10,000 teachers. I can assure the Council that our assistance is not limited to certain areas. We intend to expand our assistance in these fields.

Before concluding, let me reiterate the important role of the United Nations in Afghanistan. With international attention focused closely on the country, expectations for the role of the United Nations are higher than ever. A few months ago, Member States

gave UNAMA increased resources to implement its strengthened role. We look forward to tangible progress in the country, facilitated through coordination by the United Nations Mission and the strong leadership of the Special Representative.

Japan, as the lead country on Afghanistan in the Council, is pleased to submit a draft resolution extending the mandate of UNAMA for a further 12 months. It is our sincere hope that the Council will reaffirm its unwavering support for the United Nations Mission by adopting the draft resolution unanimously in the next few days.

Mr. Mayr-Harting (Austria): I, too, wish to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kai Eide, for his briefing to the Council today. We greatly appreciate his personal commitment, which he has shown again today, and the leadership that he provides at the head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). I would also like to welcome the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, Ambassador Tanin, to this table.

We align ourselves with the statement that will be made later in this debate by the Permanent Representative of the Czech Republic on behalf of the European Union. Let me also say that we support the recommendation to extend UNAMA's mandate for a further 12 months with a view to fully implementing its mandate in all its aspects.

For Afghanistan, the elections to be held in August are a very important — indeed, essential — step in the democratic process of State-building. For the first time, Afghan authorities have the primary responsibility for organizing the elections. We welcome the successful completion of the voter registration process; it will be of critical importance to ensuring a fair, transparent and credible election process, and UNAMA's assistance will play a very important role in that.

The ongoing reform efforts in the area of governance are also very relevant, and we are grateful to the Special Representative for drawing our attention to some of these very positive developments today. The reform of the Ministry of Interior and of the Afghanistan National Police could have a positive effect on a number of serious challenges to security on the ground, including the creation of a positive security environment for the elections, respect for the rule of law, the fight against corruption, and counter-narcotics efforts. Austria is currently examining the possibility of contributing to the police cooperation and demining activities of the United Nations.

Another important development mentioned in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2009/135) and by the Special Representative is the decrease in poppy cultivation. We wish to commend the Afghan authorities and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) for that achievement, which needs to be further consolidated. We also welcome the intensification of the activities of the International Security Assistance Force in the fight against the illegal processing and trafficking of drugs. Opium production in Afghanistan remains a challenge, and it is clear that is linked to the security situation and to the corruption phenomenon. It is of particular importance to ensure the sustainability of alternative livelihoods. Furthermore, the regional dimension of drug production and trade needs to be tackled. This is being addressed, inter alia, under UNODC's "rainbow strategy" — a programme that my Government supports.

Regional cooperation is crucial to the stabilization of Afghanistan. All of Afghanistan's neighbours need to be included in this process. We welcome the new positive trend in economic and political cooperation, in particular the renewed relationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan, and encourage UNAMA to provide further support to regional cooperation, in accordance with its mandate.

We share the concerns expressed about the deteriorating security situation in Afghanistan and the intensification of the conflict, in some areas at least. The impact of the conflict on civilians is of particular concern. Anti-Government elements pose the greatest threat to the civilian population in Afghanistan. The situation of civilians is made worse by attacks on non-governmental organizations and humanitarian workers. We are also extremely worried about recent attacks on schools. The prevention of attacks on children — in particular, putting an end to the targeting of girls — has to be a top priority. The ongoing recruitment of children by the Taliban and the use of children as suicide bombers are also of great concern and need to be stopped.

We welcome the serious efforts undertaken by pro-Government forces during past months to reduce the impact of their operations on civilians and the enhanced cooperation with the Afghan Government in

that regard. We hope that these efforts will be effective in reducing civilian casualties. Further efforts to minimize civilian casualties would be of critical relevance.

We value the work of the human rights unit of UNAMA and believe that the Mission's mandate to monitor the situation of civilians, to coordinate efforts to ensure their protection and to assist in the full implementation of human rights is an important aspect of UNAMA's work. Equally important is the strengthening of national institutions, in particular the judiciary, and full support for the work of the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission. Special attention has to be given to the issue of human rights in the administration of justice, including the improvement of conditions in detention.

In recent months, as has been mentioned today, there has been an increase in violence against women, including against women working for the police, provincial councils and local government. This trend is clearly worrying in the light of the forthcoming elections. We are convinced that women's rights have to be a priority in Afghanistan, and thus also in the protection mandate of UNAMA.

In conclusion, let me assure the Council of Austria's full support for the commitments made in Paris in June 2008. We need to work together to enable UNAMA to perform its critical task of coordinating international civilian activities in Afghanistan in an effective manner. I must say that what the Special Representative had to say on that subject today was particularly impressive; it is clear that coordination is particularly important. At a time when overall financial developments make international contributions even more difficult, coordination becomes ever more important.

We also need to enhance Afghan ownership by way of capacity-building and by complementing the efforts of the people of Afghanistan themselves, because one thing is certainly clear: whatever the international community undertakes has to be done in very close cooperation with — and for — Afghanistan and the people of Afghanistan.

Mr. İlkin (Turkey): I would first like to thank Special Representative Kai Eide for his interesting and comprehensive briefing. I also welcome our colleague Ambassador Tanin, Permanent Representative of Afghanistan.

We very much appreciate the leading role of the United Nations in coordinating the efforts of the international community to assist Afghanistan. We express our full support for the endeavours of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) in that direction.

Afghanistan today is still passing through a critical period. This period brings to the fore both challenges and opportunities, which are in fact well defined in the Secretary-General's report (S/2009/135). We fully agree with his observations and recommendations.

Actually, there is not much divergence within the international community as to what needs to be done in Afghanistan to achieve our common objectives. But we are still not where we want to be. For that, resolute and concerted efforts are needed at the local, regional and international levels. Given the critical period ahead of us and the broad consensus on the way forward, it is now high time to step up to the occasion and deliver the expectations of Afghanistan.

While doing so, we should always bear in mind that any further deterioration in that country would have broad adverse effects reaching beyond Afghanistan. Therefore, we must not be dismayed by occasional setbacks and must always keep a clear perspective as to what we can and should achieve collectively. We must do so in a way that will further strengthen the hopes and expectations of the Afghan people. After all, we should not forget that, unless we win the hearts and minds of the Afghan people, peace and stabilization will always be a distant objective.

In that regard, there is certainly a need for a comprehensive approach to be put in place, encompassing security, governance, the rule of law, human rights and social and economic development. All these aspects are interlinked and, hence, the following four areas of priority deserve equal and special attention: comprehensive economic development with a visible impact on the living conditions of the people; a strong Afghan military and police to take the lead and assert ownership of the nation's security; inclusive national reconciliation that will consolidate peace and stability in the country; and a modern education and justice system to effectively combat extremism of all sorts.

Furthermore, in the immediate future, the presidential elections to be held in August will also be

of critical importance. Those elections should help the democratic process in the country rather than creating new fault lines. For that, the elections should be well prepared and should be carried out in a free and fair manner. Needless to say, the United Nations has an important role to play in this regard, and we support UNAMA's efforts to that end.

Likewise, regional cooperation is also a must to accomplish our goals in Afghanistan. In the light of recent promising developments in this context, especially with respect to Afghanistan-Pakistan relations, the international community should encourage and help regional cooperation and the joint endeavours of those countries.

As a country which has special ties with the region, Turkey has contributed and will be contributing to the improvement of the situation in Afghanistan in every way it can. Apart from our continued support for the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and the sizeable reconstruction assistance provided through our Provincial Reconstruction Team in Wardak, a multifaceted, extensive assistance programme is under way. In this context, in 2008, we doubled our pledge of development assistance to Afghanistan to $200 million. Hence, we will focus on more visible projects of direct impact, such as establishing a new university, building a modern training and research hospital and paving roads of Kabul.

We decided to contribute €1.5 million to the Afghan National Army trust fund. Our existing training programmes, both in Turkey and in Wardak, designed to support the Afghan National Police will continue. We will also contribute a total of $5 million for the elections in Afghanistan.

Furthermore, as part of our efforts to enhance regional cooperation, the Turkey-Pakistan-Afghanistan trilateral process is geared towards helping develop closer relations and mutually beneficial cooperation among those countries. In April 2007, Turkey hosted the first trilateral summit with the participation of the Presidents of Afghanistan and Pakistan, which culminated in Ankara Declaration. A joint working group was established at the Ankara summit to work on various cooperation projects. The second trilateral summit was held in Istanbul on 5 December 2008. The process has already come a long way and we are committed to take it further. In this framework, we intend to host a third summit.

In conclusion, I would like to underline once again that failure in Afghanistan is unthinkable. We must succeed, and we are confident that we will. Indeed, the sense of purpose and dedication around this table and within the international community at large gives us every reason to be optimistic. We also believe that the high-level meetings to be held in Moscow and in The Hague later this month will provide us with excellent opportunities to demonstrate our collective will and commitment once again.

Turkey is more than ready and willing to join in this endeavour and to do its fair share. In other words, we will not stop assisting the brotherly Afghan people in their struggle to carry their country forward. After so many decades of conflict, they deserve to live in democracy, peace, prosperity and stability. We have full confidence in the determination, resilience and wisdom of the Afghan people in their struggle to achieve that goal.

Mr. Kafando (Burkina Faso) (*spoke in French*): I wish to join previous speakers in thanking Mr. Kai Eide, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan and head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), for his briefing. I would also like to welcome the presence of our colleague, the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, at this meeting.

The reports are clear. The situation in Afghanistan is still of great concern both at the security and political levels and in the economic field. Despite the unprecedented mobilization of the international community in support of the efforts of the Afghan Government, peace and stability remain elusive. The Security Council was able to become fully aware of that during the important mission that it conducted there in November 2008. The boldness and brazenness of the insurgents and the resurgence of suicide attacks are challenges that need to be met, particularly at a time when the country is preparing to undertake presidential and provincial elections. As the report of the Secretary-General (S/2009/135) notes, the number of incidents compared with the previous year increased by 42 per cent in December 2008 and by 75 per cent in January 2009, which is a negative trend, not to say the opposite of what is sought by the efforts of the international community to restore peace and stability in Afghanistan.

The question is how credible, uncontestable elections can be organized when insecurity and fear risk excluding from the process a significant part of the population as no census has been held. The Afghan political class should, therefore, act as quickly as possible to organize and above all achieve national reconciliation, including by strengthening political dialogue. For its part, the Afghan Government has already committed itself to that approach by establishing a dialogue with those moderate insurgents who are ready to respect the Afghan constitution, renounce violence and accept the rules of democracy.

We highly welcome those noble efforts. We should encourage the Government in its struggle against corruption, the real cancer at the heart of the political and economic governance system, which will hinder any recovery effort until it is removed. We must also congratulate the Government on its decision to organize elections on 20 August, although such a decision was not easy given the high stakes. In that regard, we welcome the technical assistance of the United Nations and of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the strengthening of international troop levels to boost the capacity of the Afghan forces to secure the electoral process and make possible a dialogue with the opposition in a climate of trust.

The economic situation in Afghanistan equally deserves special attention. We advocate maintaining a cohesive approach in implementing the Afghanistan National Development Strategy. While still modest, the progress recorded in reducing poppy cultivation — a key element of the Strategy — and the prospects for the agricultural sector are encouraging. We call on donors, as well as international partners, to mobilize additional funds to help meet the challenges in priority sectors such as agriculture, energy and infrastructure. However, appropriate steps must be taken to ensure that that assistance benefits the development and the well-being of the people of Afghanistan.

The humanitarian situation in Afghanistan is still an issue of concern. We welcome the measures already undertaken to tackle it, including the establishment of a new United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Afghanistan, supported by a humanitarian action plan that will soon be operational. Likewise, we once again urge the international community to step up its mobilization to help the Afghan people overcome the food crisis and to alleviate their suffering.

The other major concern remains the continuing human rights violations, in particular extrajudicial executions and sexual violence and discrimination against women and girls, whose status remains vulnerable. We call for more rigorous implementation of the Action Plan for Peace, Reconciliation and Justice.

Lastly, it is worth noting the significant asset that international and regional cooperation represent for Afghanistan. That is demonstrated by the agreement with Uzbekistan on the provision of electricity and by the forthcoming Regional Economic Cooperation Conference, to be held in Islamabad in April, which will consider Afghanistan's various priority projects. In terms of political cooperation, we welcome the new vision adopted with Pakistan to fight against extremism and terrorism, and we note the need to establish a dialogue with opposition groups.

Regarding UNAMA, we reiterate its crucial role, which must be to restore peace and stability in Afghanistan. That is why, for it to carry out its mission successfully, we are in favour of extending its mandate, as recommended by the Secretary-General.

In conclusion, we reaffirm our belief in the primary role that the United Nations must play in restoring peace in Afghanistan and in ensuring its economic recovery and national reconstruction.

Mr. Bui The Giang (Viet Nam): I join other Council members in thanking the Secretary-General for his report (S/2009/135) and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kai Eide, for his important updated briefing on the situation in Afghanistan. I also welcome Ambassador Tanin to the Council.

More than seven years since the overthrow of the Taliban regime, a new Afghanistan has emerged. Thanks to the convergence of the committed, generous efforts from the international community and the resilience of the Afghan people, certain progress has been made in a number of areas, promising possible subsequent positive results in coordinating security activities, tightening poppy production control, increasing agricultural output, implementing the Mine Action Programme and cooperating with the outside world, first of all with neighbouring countries.

However, we remain deeply concerned about the continued deterioration of peace and security and the acutely difficulties faced by the population of Afghanistan, as most notably reflected by the fact that 2008 was the most violent year since 2001, with more casualties and suffering inflicted upon the Afghan people, especially women and children. That is in addition to the many other challenges described in the Secretary-General's report.

We therefore share the view that there can be no purely military solution to these challenges. Instead, an integrated approach and a comprehensive vision are required, involving several key factors. In that connection, we share many points raised by the Secretary-General in his report and by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in his briefing, and we wish to emphasize that, in social and economic terms, it is essential to ensure the effective implementation, under the ownership of the Afghan people, of the Afghanistan Compact, the National Drug Control Strategy and, especially, the Afghanistan National Development Strategy, which identifies agriculture, energy and infrastructure as priority areas. Moreover, improving social welfare, including health care and education services, should continue to be among the main priorities of the Government of Afghanistan. In that process, it is important that the Afghan authorities and people are provided with the necessary assistance to enhance their capacity and proactive participation both in decision-making and in implementing projects and programmes thereby helping increase aid effectiveness.

In the political field, reconciliation, while not an end in itself, needs to be part of an inclusive political process in Afghanistan. We call on the leaders of Afghanistan to place peace and the political stability of their country at the centre of all calculations, overcome divisions, renounce violence and advance dialogue and cooperation in the common interests of the country.

As this year is a critical test for Afghanistan, especially with the presidential elections scheduled for August, we welcome all efforts by the international community to further support the country. We commend the upcoming special conferences on Afghanistan to be convened in Moscow and The Hague. We take special note of the recently strengthened regional cooperation in support of Afghanistan's economic, political and security improvement — especially the resumption of such regional initiatives as the Peace Jirga process — for we are convinced that the challenges in Afghanistan, interrelated and interconnected in nature as they are, demand a greater role and contribution on the part of regional partners in the quest for a comprehensive and sustainable solution.

We reaffirm our support for the leading role of the United Nations in coordinating international civilian activities in Afghanistan. After their timely allocation of additional financial, human and security resources to UNAMA for 2009, the General Assembly and its member States are looking to the Mission to make further progress on the ground. We support UNAMA in providing technical assistance, at the request of the Afghan authorities, for the pivotal upcoming elections and for continuing its coordination with other international donors, agencies and organizations to make the most of the available resources. At the same time, UNAMA should continue to intensify its cooperation with the Government of Afghanistan, as well as with relevant organizations and stakeholders, to fulfil its mandate.

So that UNAMA can carry out its duties in the current situation, we endorse the extension of its present mandate for another 12 months. We also welcome all measures and steps being taken to avoid casualties among civilians, who are the ultimate beneficiaries of the peace process.

It is high time for the Afghan people to bear responsibility for their own future. We expect that, with renewed regional and international support, the coming presidential elections will be conducted in a free, fair and secure environment, thus paving the way for the restoration of peace and security, which the country so deserves. We sincerely wish the people and the Government of Afghanistan every success in that process, to which Viet Nam, for its part, stands ready to contribute positively and constructively.

Mr. Liu Zhenmin (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Chinese delegation would like to thank Special Representative Eide for his briefing.

Today, after more than seven years of war, Afghanistan finds itself at a new crossroads. The developments in that country have attracted the world's attention. On the one hand, the security situation continues its downward slide, causing heavy civilian casualties and exacerbating the humanitarian crisis. On the other hand, the international community, including

the United Nations, has increased its attention and input with regard to Afghanistan.

At the Paris Conference last June, the international community reaffirmed its support for the national reconstruction of Afghanistan and for the core coordinating role of the United Nations in assisting the country. Despite the current and future difficulties facing Afghanistan, we have no reason to lose confidence. This year's election will be a major event in the political life of the country. Afghanistan's Independent Electoral Commission recently reconfirmed the date of 20 August for the presidential election. We believe that the Afghan people will be able to use their wisdom to appropriately address election-related issues and, through the election, increase social cohesion and improve the effectiveness of the Government's functioning.

It is particularly important to ensure a secure environment for the election. We hope that the increase in the numbers of troops from the countries concerned will help to ease the security situation in Afghanistan. We also hope that, with the assistance of the international community, the Government, the Afghan security forces and the Afghanistan National Police will continue to build their capacities so that they can soon take up the heavy responsibility of maintaining national security and social stability.

Experience has shown that military means alone cannot reverse the situation in Afghanistan. In the long run, it is essential to encourage various ethnic groups and factions to achieve reconciliation through dialogue. At the same time, in carrying out military action, the parties concerned should take care to reduce civilian casualties.

With a view to responding effectively to security concerns, Special Representative Eide and the Afghan Government have proposed to take an integrated approach and undertake different targeted measures in different areas of Afghanistan. In the northern and western parts of the country, where the situation is relatively stable, the focus will be on developing the economy, whereas in the south and east the focus will be on strengthening security.

In our view, promoting economic development in the southern and eastern parts of Afghanistan is just as important as stabilizing the security situation, especially since those are the areas in which poppy cultivation is most concentrated. It is only by vigorously developing alternative-crop cultivation and promoting economic growth that poppy cultivation can be further reduced, thus diminishing the root causes of social instability in the country. We call on the international community to further increase its support for Afghanistan's agricultural production.

At the initiative of a number of countries, an international conference on the question of Afghanistan will be held in The Hague on 31 March to discuss the direction of the country's future development. We wish the conference success and hope that the parties concerned will reach agreement on such issues as stabilizing the security situation and promoting economic development and will point out a clear direction for the next phase of work in assisting Afghanistan. We have also noted that the countries members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization will be holding a meeting in Moscow, and we wish that meeting success also.

We support the continued leading role of the United Nations in coordinating the international community's assistance to Afghanistan, and we support the extension of UNAMA's current mandate for another year. We are willing to continue to provide help to Afghanistan to the best of our abilities.

Ms. DiCarlo (United States of America): I would like to join others in welcoming Special Representative Eide to the Council today and to thank him for his briefing. My Government would like to express its deep gratitude to him for his efforts to help stabilize Afghanistan. His leadership and commitment remain critical to the implementation of the expanded mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). We congratulate him and the staff of UNAMA and offer them our full support.

I would also like to welcome Ambassador Tanin today. I would like to assure him of the commitment of the United States to a stable and secure Afghanistan and of our continued cooperation.

The United Nations, NATO and other contributors all have important roles to play in making Afghanistan more secure, helping to build the capacities of its Government, strengthening its justice system and expanding the reach of economic opportunity. My Government strongly supports UNAMA's leadership in coordinating international aid efforts and improving cooperation between civilian and military operations.

We also welcome the decision of the General Assembly to provide the crucial resources UNAMA needs to fulfil its mandate. Approving UNAMA's 2009 budget of $168 million and giving it the authority to hire 437 new staff members and expand to four new offices this year were important steps. But we have to do more together.

My Government urges the United Nations to speed up the process of funding to UNAMA and we encourage Member States to provide highly qualified staff to help fill these new staff positions. UNAMA's role is critical, and, of course, we strongly support the renewal of its mandate.

I would like to touch on several of the issues raised in the Secretary-General's report (S/2009/135). The United States agrees with the conclusion that the problem of the Taliban's resurgence and the spread of extremism in the region cannot be solved by military means alone. Civilian assistance is critical to success in Afghanistan. We are therefore encouraged by the formation of the integrated approach working group, and we look forward to hearing about its progress in delivering aid and completing needs assessments.

The United States sees the upcoming elections as the key strategic event in Afghanistan this year. We support an open, fair election in which the Afghan people can choose their own leaders, free from intimidation. We appreciate the efforts made by the Independent Election Commission of Afghanistan, the United Nations, international donors and security forces and Afghan security services to confront the difficult challenges in preparing for the upcoming voting. The United States supports the Commission's decision to hold the elections on 20 August in order to maximize the fairness, transparency and universality of the voting. We call upon Afghanistan's leaders to find a solution within their constitutional framework that will ensure the continuity, legitimacy and stability of their Government throughout the election process.

We must also move urgently to ensure that the elections are properly funded. The Commission has presented a budget of $224 million to give the voting process the resources it will require. We urge donors to follow through on their pledges as soon as possible.

There will be no sustained progress in Afghanistan no matter how many troops are deployed or how much money is spent if we do not make substantial progress on increasing the country's capacity for good governance. First and foremost, such actions must come from the Government and the people of Afghanistan. But we will continue to work together with them to provide ongoing support here.

Corruption remains one of the primary concerns of the Afghan people. It undermines efforts to help build an impartial, fair Government that delivers services to all citizens equally, without regard for their wealth or connections. We need to see progress from the Afghan Government in fighting corruption, expanding the reach of the central Government, strengthening local governments and creating economic opportunity.

We also share the concerns raised in the report about the deteriorating human rights situation in Afghanistan. We are particularly concerned by the harm that discriminatory laws and practices are causing to women and children. While we are encouraged by the steps that the Afghan Government has taken to implement the National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan, we are in full agreement that much more needs to be done. The United States has trained more than 3,000 Afghan women as teachers over the past year, and we continue to support higher education for women through our programmes at the University of Kabul. We are also helping to train more than 22,000 women to help carry out the upcoming elections. We welcome the views of the Special Representative about how UNAMA and the international community might cooperate better with the Afghan Government to meet the needs of women and girls for education, health care, economic opportunity, justice and a chance to lead.

We are encouraged by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime forecast of a possible further decrease in opium cultivation in 2009, as steep a drop as 30 per cent, according to these United Nations estimates. But the drug threat in Afghanistan remains unacceptably high. It will require a long-term commitment by both the Government of Afghanistan and the international community for us to meet this challenge. We are particularly concerned by the deteriorating security conditions in the south, where the insurgency now dominates and where 98 per cent of Afghanistan's poppies are now grown.

I must address the issue of civilian casualties. The United States, our NATO allies and our coalition partners deeply regret any loss of civilian life. International forces in Afghanistan take extraordinary

measures to avoid civilian casualties, in sharp contrast to the Taliban, who deliberately attack and endanger civilians. The International Security Assistance Force issued a directive last December specifically aimed at reducing the number of civilian casualties resulting from its operations. I want to stress that our goal is to avoid casualties. When events that may involve civilians occur, joint Afghan and international teams move quickly to investigate and, where appropriate, compensate victims.

Finally, we appreciate the role of the United Nations in co-chairing the forthcoming 31 March International Conference on Afghanistan, along with the Governments of Afghanistan and the Netherlands. We look forward to reaffirming the broad international consensus on supporting Afghanistan, as embodied in the Afghanistan Compact of 2006, and we particularly look forward to a productive dialogue on ways to provide aid more effectively, to help meet the Afghan Government's priorities. These are improved security, better governance and more robust economic growth.

Mr. Ripert (France) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to extend France's condolences to the families of the victims of the attack that today killed the Afghan member of parliament Dad Mohammad Khan and four other individuals. France firmly condemns this assassination.

The Permanent Representative of the Czech Republic will later make a statement on behalf of the European Union, with which France, of course, associates itself. At this stage, I would like to make a few additional comments.

As others have done before me, I would like to express my gratitude to Mr. Kai Eide for his briefing and in particular for the untiring efforts he has undertaken since his appointment to ensure better overall cohesiveness in the international community's work in Afghanistan under United Nations auspices. These efforts are beginning to bear fruit.

The international community firmly reiterated its support to the people and Government of Afghanistan in June 2008 in Paris. The following Moscow and The Hague conferences will provide us with an opportunity to reiterate this common and lasting commitment and to take stock of the implementation of commitments undertaken and of the priorities for the coming months.

These conferences are part of the general trend of increased involvement by the international community. This momentum is something that the Special Representative has done a great deal to nurture by actively contributing to the implementation of the comprehensive approach, which brought together political, security, reconstruction and development efforts.

I would highlight in particular the essential issue of aid effectiveness and coordination, where progress unfortunately remains insufficient. The most pressing issue in this regard is transparency in terms of aid. To ensure that the United Nations is able to carry out its coordination mission, it must be able ensure that it and the Afghan authorities are in a position to have a clear overall picture of the efforts of all donors. This is something the Special Representative referred to earlier.

The United Nations must also continue, through its Special Representative, to symbolize the voice of the international community to the Afghan authorities and people. Mr. Eide has been successful in playing this role in an impartial manner. He has addressed a number of difficult topics such as good governance, corruption, human rights and the problem of civilian victims with the political, democratic authorities and civil society in Afghanistan and with international stakeholders.

I would like to again reiterate France's full confidence in Mr. Eide in the period leading up to the elections, which is particularly critical to the democratic future of the country.

The upcoming presidential and legislative elections are in fact a major step in the process of Afghans taking ownership of their own democracy. All Afghan political officials must work to ensure the conduct of free and fair elections throughout the country and to preserve stability and security throughout the electoral process. The United Nations has an important role to play, at both the technical and the political levels, to help them.

But the elections should not distract us from the other pressing problems facing Afghanistan. The Special Representative has drawn up a convincing list of these. Significant progress has been achieved in various fields over the past year, progress that now needs to be consolidated. In the field of security, the Afghan National Army has been considerably

strengthened and is increasingly in a position to take over from international forces.

The police remain the weak point in the security system. Since his appointment as Interior Minister, Mr. Atmar has started an in-depth reform of the police that the international community must back via initiatives in keeping with the stakes. France is committed to participating actively with its European partners in this effort.

Encouraging developments have also taken place in the fight against drug trafficking. They remain to be confirmed, including in the fight against the diversion of the chemical precursors of heroin, which is subject of resolution 1817 (2008).

The situation in the field of human rights is a serious topic of concern, especially because of the increase in attacks against the media and civil society. Significant progress made since 2001 remains precarious. The authorities must, with the assistance of the international community, act more firmly to guarantee journalists and representatives of civil society conditions that enable them to engage in their activities freely and safely.

I would also like to reiterate our concerns regarding the issue of civilian casualties, which — we need to underscore this point — are mainly the result of deliberate attacks by the Taliban and other extremist groups that display thereby their absolute disdain for human life. At the same time, France is aware of the need to continue, with its partners and its allies, significant efforts achieved by Government and international forces to avoid civilian casualties.

The President of the French Republic, Mr. Nicolas Sarkozy, has reiterated on numerous occasions the priority that the stabilization of Afghanistan and the region as a whole has for France. Over the past two years, France has carried out a major reinforcement of its military commitment in Afghanistan. Anxious to ensure that we have a comprehensive approach, we have also significantly strengthened our civilian and political commitment since 2008. But over and above that, the depth of the Afghan crisis, the evolution of the international commitment and the increasing interrelations among the problems that affect Afghanistan and its neighbours have led France to further integrate the regional aspects of the problem in its approach.

It is in this context that the President of the Republic, on 26 February, appointed a Member of Parliament, Mr. Pierre Lellouche, as his Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan. This decision is in line with France's belief that the Afghan crisis cannot be dealt with in isolation from the situation in the region, and primarily in Pakistan. Our priorities are to promote the emergence of a stable, prosperous and democratic Afghanistan, to contribute to the stabilization of democratic Pakistan and to reduce the terrorist threat of which this region has become the epicentre.

It is also to lend political momentum to the theme of strengthening regional cooperation that our Foreign Minister, Mr. Bernard Kouchner, invited Afghanistan, its neighbouring States and the key cooperation partners of the international community to France in December 2008 for a ministerial meeting, held in La Celle Saint-Cloud under the co-chairmanship of the United Nations. We welcome the will demonstrated by Afghanistan and its neighbours during this meeting to make concrete progress to strengthen their cooperation against drug trafficking and terrorism, as well as to develop regional economic cooperation. We hope that the positive trends in relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan will contribute to achieving concrete results during the upcoming Regional Economic Cooperation Conference in Islamabad.

UNAMA will have to face many challenges in the coming year. It will require our full support. I therefore welcome the proposal to hold Security Council meetings every three months. That will enable the Council to provide more active follow-up to the implementation of the mandate entrusted to UNAMA and thereby to provide more effective support for the action of the Special Representative.

Mr. Heller (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, I would first like to thank Mr. Kai Eide, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, for presenting the latest report of the Secretary-General on the situation in that country (S/2009/135) and for his remarks regarding the work of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). I would also like to thank the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, Ambassador Tanin, for attending this meeting.

Mexico finds that the elections process to take place next August in Afghanistan is both a major

challenge and an opportunity to achieve peace and a political solution to a conflict that has been going on for over eight years now. The elections should herald a new chapter for national reconciliation and strengthening sovereignty and democracy in Afghanistan.

That is why we support the work of the Independent Electoral Commission and we hope that elections take place in a free, impartial and transparent fashion, in an atmosphere of security that will guarantee the rights of the Afghan people. We call on the United Nations system, and especially the Mission in Afghanistan, to redouble their efforts and work with the Electoral Commission, political parties, civil society and other actors to encourage successful elections this year.

Mexico believes that ensuring the security of the population in the framework of the rule of law is one of the main challenges that Afghanistan faces in the short and medium term. The report is very clear in this regard, bearing in mind the deterioration of the situation in this area and the extremist violence that is spreading in various regions. It is unfortunate that there is an upsurge of victims in the civilian population, and we trust that greater cooperation between the Afghan armed forces and the international forces will make itself felt through a reduction of damage to civilians and an improvement of the general security situation in the country.

Once again, we emphatically reject terrorism in all its forms and expressions. We condemn the attacks on innocent persons and express our condolences to the families of the victims of the terrorist attacks and to the people and the Government of Afghanistan.

For Mexico, the security of humanitarian workers and of the most vulnerable sectors of the population, such as children, calls for priority attention, in accordance with the standards and principles of international humanitarian law. Specifically, we believe that all measures should be taken to prevent the recruitment of children by armed groups and ensure their return to a safe environment.

Moreover, we recognize the efforts of the Government of Afghanistan and the international community to move forward in the removal and destruction of mines, other types of explosives and remnants of war in the country. Nevertheless, these artifacts continue to be a serious threat to the civilian population. For this reason, additional support should be given to demining programmes.

We commend the efforts undertaken by the Government to reform various ministries and police forces and to reduce and fight against corruption. These efforts contribute to the institutional normalization of the country and to building the population's confidence in its authorities.

The fight against drug production and trafficking is another priority area for Afghanistan's stability. We are gratified to see that the Government's efforts to bring down production in several provinces are starting to show positive results. In this area, cooperation with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the regional focus on the problem are of particular importance.

We agree with the Secretary-General that UNAMA has the appropriate mandate to play a role in coordinating the various efforts to promote stability and development in Afghanistan. The additional resources approved for the Mission will enable it to strengthen its institutional capacity and extend its presence in several areas of the country. The establishment of an office of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs is therefore timely, and we trust that the Mission will continue to strengthen its activities in the field of human rights protection.

Stability in Afghanistan does not depend solely on the success of military and security actions. In line with national priorities, a comprehensive approach should be maintained, which will strengthen institutional capacity-building and promote socio-economic development. This should take into account the regional dimension of a number of problems affecting the country.

The international conferences that will take place in a few days in The Hague and in Moscow, where the situation in Afghanistan and its linkage with neighbouring States will be discussed, are a clear demonstration of the firm commitment of the international community to the country. Based on that comprehensive approach and regional view, it will be possible to reach a long-term solution that will be consistent with the efforts made by the Government of Afghanistan.

Mr. Urbina (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish to begin by thanking Mr. Kai Eide, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan and head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), for his briefing and for the wealth of information he has provided the Council this afternoon. I also welcome the presence of Ambassador Tanin; it is a pleasure to have him among us today.

For eight years the United Nations has been strongly supporting the Afghan people and their efforts to build a durable democracy, promote socio-economic development and achieve sustainable peace. Challenges remain today, and a difficult security situation may be expected in the coming months. It is important that the international community maintain and strengthen its commitment to Afghanistan. Today, my delegation recognizes the prime role of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy and the priorities established at the Paris Conference as the foundation for peacebuilding and development for the Afghan people.

As the Special Representative said, the situation in Afghanistan calls for a comprehensive approach and a national vision. Besides military measures, this should include the promotion of good governance, the rule of law and development and economic growth opportunities for the population. We also believe that the Government and the people of Afghanistan should claim ownership of the processes to achieve those ends and that international efforts should be strengthened to improve security conditions and the capacities of the Afghan authorities in those areas.

The presidential elections to take place in August will be a key step towards strengthening democracy in Afghanistan, and the international community must support and be engaged in that process. My delegation welcomes the establishment, as part of the UNAMA political component, of an office which will work with political actors to guarantee a favourable climate for free, impartial and broadly participatory elections. Among other positive signs, we recognize the forecasted reduction in poppy production for 2009, progress in security sector reform and the continuing improvement in political relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

My delegation is concerned by the increase in civilian casualties, the attacks against humanitarian personnel and schools and the use of civilians as human shields. In particular, we deplore the fact that children continue to be principal victims of the escalating conflict and that there are still attempts by armed groups to recruit children. We call on all parties to exert greater efforts to adopt measures to reduce civilian casualties to a minimum, in accordance with international humanitarian law, international human rights norms and Security Council resolutions 1746 (2007) and 1806 (2008).

Costa Rica would like to see that concern reflected in the draft resolution that is being negotiated. The Council cannot allow UNAMA, the International Security Assistance Force or the Afghan authorities to be weakened by leaving out a commitment to protect civilian victims of the conflict, in particular victims of the insurgents. Still in the area of human rights, my delegation trusts that greater efforts will be made to protect women and to implement other gender policies.

Finally, we highlight the work of UNAMA in coordinating the efforts of the international community. We agree with the Secretary-General that the coordination of those efforts under UNAMA's leadership is indispensable to achieve the objectives set forth in the mandate. We reiterate our support for UNAMA and support the recommendation of the Secretary-General that its mandate be renewed for 12 months.

Sir John Sawers (United Kingdom): I begin by thanking the Secretary-General for his report (S/2009/135) and Special Representative Eide for his briefing today, which painted a picture which we recognize: a difficult security and humanitarian situation, but with some encouraging signs of progress being made in areas such as the administration of the elections, the performance of the key ministries, counter-narcotics and civilian-military cooperation.

It is often said that every year is a crucial year for Afghanistan, and that is probably even more true this year than it usually is, because not only do we have the presidential elections in August, but we have various other issues which are on the cusp. This year will determine whether we are going to move forward to achieve the goals of the international community or whether we are going to continue with the present insufficient degree of collective progress.

Successful and credible elections will be vital to Afghanistan's future. We welcome the agreement

reached on the August date and we urge Afghanistan's political leaders to reach consensus on the way to preserve stability and security in the run-up to the elections, which means stable government during that period.

We must avoid a situation of continued uncertainty and disagreement in Kabul during what may well prove to be another difficult summer with the insurgency in the south and the east of the country. Elections have to be prepared properly in order to ensure their credibility. The Special Representative has set out the bodies and mechanisms that are being established to support the electoral process. We are encouraged that the Independent Electoral Commission in Afghanistan was able to conduct the voter registration process successfully and relatively smoothly.

There is a crucial role being played by the United Nations Development Programme in providing technical support to enable the Afghans to run those elections, and the United Kingdom has provided more than £16 million in funding for that. We look to others to help address the current $100 million shortfall in the elections budget.

Aid coordination and effectiveness constitute another challenge facing Afghanistan this year and are at the heart of UNAMA's mandate. This was addressed in the Special Representative's briefing. It is vital that in 2009, international assistance to Afghanistan becomes greater than the sum of its parts. I took careful note of Mr. Eide's jibes against the international community for some of our failings on this, but we welcome the decision of the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board to focus on five sectors, and UNAMA's efforts to identify priority projects and rally the donor community behind them. Equally important is UNAMA's work to develop a single Government database to track international contributions. There has been a major improvement in the mechanisms for aid effectiveness over the last year or so, and we paid tribute to the work that Mr. Eide and his team have done on that front.

Our ability to continue to deliver a comprehensive strategy depends in large part on civilian-military cooperation and coordination. UNAMA provides a link between the international civilian effort, the international military effort and the Afghan Government. This is not always an easy role to play, and we are well aware of the tensions that sometimes exist, but I commend UNAMA's work in this area, together with that of the International Security Assistance Force and the Afghan authorities, to deliver an integrated approach.

On civilian casualties, we all deeply regret them whenever they take place, and it is important that we continue to discuss the issue frankly and transparently. There is no doubt as to the damage that reports of civilian casualties do to perceptions of the international effort in Afghanistan, but no one should be in any doubt that those engaged in the international military effort make strenuous efforts to ensure that they do not occur, and we have tightened our rules of engagement to this end. Where they do occur, we have improved our investigation and reporting mechanisms.

In contrast, and as the Special Representative pointed out, the Afghan people and the international community in Afghanistan face an insurgency that does not care about civilian casualties. Civilians are used as shields and are now increasingly the target of deliberate attacks by the insurgents.

Despite all these challenges, we share the view of the Secretary-General and his Special Representative that there are grounds for optimism. One of those, as Mr. Eide set out, is the prognosis for poppy production in 2009, which is encouraging. If, as he cautiously predicted, we see a sharp decrease in overall production and a further increase in the number of poppy-free provinces, that would be a significant achievement.

Another reason for optimism is the increase in the resources available to UNAMA. For some time, there was a gap between the scope of UNAMA's mandate and the resources available to implement it. UNAMA's new budget, agreed last year, means that gap has now been closed, and we welcome the new posts that have been filled and the additional offices that are being opened.

However, this also means that expectations for UNAMA are even higher and that it will be expected to deliver even more. An important area of that delivery has already begun, as I have set out. The reality of Afghanistan in 2009 is that all of those involved in the international effort, including the United Nations, are going to have to up their game. We are confident that, in Kai Eide, UNAMA has the leadership in place to rise to that challenge.

Let me conclude by expressing the United Kingdom's appreciation for UNAMA's work over the past year. UNAMA's staff do vital work in difficult circumstances, and they and the Afghan people can count on the continued support of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Jurica (Croatia): Let me thank Mr. Kai Eide for his briefing. In the same vein, I would like to pay tribute to Mr. Eide for his determined leadership and to all the staff of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) for their genuine commitment and hard work undertaken in harsh circumstances. I also welcome the presence of Afghan Ambassador Tanin.

Croatia shares the concerns over the deterioration of the security situation in Afghanistan, where insurgents, extremists and other radicals are attempting to destabilize previously calm areas and increasingly relying on asymmetric attacks and advanced methods of warfare. The direct targeting of international organizations and aid workers is yet another obvious indicator of the sort of enemy the Afghan Government and the international community are confronting. As stated in the Secretary-General's report (S/2009/135), most civilian casualties are the result of the actions of anti-Government elements, which are increasingly characterized by a total disregard for civilian lives.

There is a general consensus that this year will be crucial for Afghanistan in more than one aspect. The upcoming elections, scheduled for August, will be a real test of Afghanistan's democratic achievements. The elections should further stabilize the democratic process in the country and provide the highest demonstration of its legitimacy. By providing adequate technical assistance, financial contributions and additional security, the international community is doing its part to ensure free, fair, inclusive and transparent elections. We welcome the completion of the voter registration process, including in the most volatile provinces, without major incident, which we view as an important preparatory step in the electoral process.

The stability of Afghanistan is intrinsically linked to the stability of the region and cannot be achieved without genuine cooperation from its neighbours, especially Pakistan. In that context, we are heartened to see the revival of economic regional cooperation allowing for the restoration of extremely important energy and water supply lines. Furthermore, the resumption of the Peace Jirga process with Pakistan, as well as the recent meeting of the Tripartite Commission, testify to the intensifying political cooperation. We hope that the upcoming regional economic cooperation conference on Afghanistan will further strengthen relations between the countries of the region and yield concrete and practical results. We look forward to the international conferences on Afghanistan to be held in the nearest future in Moscow and The Hague.

Of course, there is no purely military solution to the problems in Afghanistan; the solution must therefore be of a political nature. In that regard, a comprehensive approach unifying military, political, humanitarian and development activities will be needed. Croatia highly values the so-called integrated approach aimed at making more effective use of civilian and military resources in the country. We find it extremely important to have the ability to perceive the specific challenges, problems and needs which are present in each and every part of that huge country, and to deploy the resources available in the most efficient and balanced way. Furthermore, we support stronger civilian-military coordination based on respect for each other's distinctive mandates and in accordance with Afghanistan's specific guidelines on the coordination of humanitarian and military actors.

Regarding aid coordination and ensuring aid effectiveness as one of the main roles that UNAMA should be playing in Afghanistan, we salute the Mission's follow-up on some of the benchmarks that the Special Representative presented to the Council at his last briefing in October 2008, especially on the development of a single Government database for information on donor contributions. We would like to see further action on some other achievable targets, particularly on the endeavour to set up a mechanism for joint audits in order to enhance accountability on each side, and on tangible, commonly agreed criteria to measure aid effectiveness.

My country welcomes the ongoing improvements in the Afghan National Army's performance, reflected, inter alia, in its ability to assume the lead responsibility for the security of the capital city, as well as in some of the provinces. Regarding the Afghanistan National Police, we strongly support the Focused District Development project. Finally, we see the fight against corruption as an important and integral part of all reform endeavours in Afghanistan, and we sincerely

trust that the increased efforts of the new minister in that regard will soon bear fruit.

Croatia received the *Afghanistan Opium Winter Rapid Assessment* report that was jointly released by the Ministry for Counter-Narcotics and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), and welcomes projections of a possible further decrease in opium cultivation in 2009, as well as the continued increase in the number of poppy-free provinces. Additionally, we strongly support the regional counter-narcotics efforts being promoted by UNODC's "rainbow strategy", and we welcome the significant seizures of precursor chemicals in Iran, Pakistan and Kyrgyzstan through the implementation of resolution 1817 (2008).

Keeping the enormous humanitarian challenges in Afghanistan in mind, Croatia welcomes the establishment of an office of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Afghanistan and the development of the Humanitarian Action Plan. We welcome the significant refugee returns in 2008, as well as the completion of the first national profile of internally displaced persons.

Human rights and the rule of law continue to be a major challenge in Afghanistan. Allow me to mention here only two of the many long-standing problems that continue to weigh heavily on the country. The entrenched impunity of discriminatory practices, especially against women and girls – to mention but two – is a good example. We strongly support decisive actions in the field of the rule of law and human rights, and we deeply believe that determined action in these areas will help to promote the aforementioned conditions and trends.

Croatia welcomes the decision of the General Assembly to almost double UNAMA's budget in order to enable it to carry out its challenging mandate. We strongly support the renewal of the UNAMA mandate for a further year. We also support the request for the Secretary-General to provide more frequent reports on developments in Afghanistan, including adequate benchmarks for measuring and tracking progress in the implementation of UNAMA's mandate.

Finally, let me reiterate that, while fully cognizant of the challenges, Croatia stands ready, through its military presence and financial support, to continue to cooperate with the Afghan Government and international partners towards achieving the final goal of ensuring a stable, secure and peaceful Afghanistan.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya.

I wish to offer a few observations on the matter before us. First, I express our thanks to the Secretary-General for his detailed and comprehensive report (S/2009/135), on which we were just briefed by Mr. Kai Eide. I wish also to welcome the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan.

I commend the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), under Mr. Eide's leadership, for its efforts and excellent performance with the purpose of rebuilding that sisterly country despite all the security challenges the Mission faces.

Most of what is taking place in Afghanistan today is the responsibility of the international community, which neglected Afghanistan after the cold war. It is regrettable that, despite all the tragedies suffered by Afghanistan due to the civil war that raged for six years between 1990 and 1996, the Security Council took no action and adopted no resolutions attempting to put an end to the war and the fighting there.

Paragraph 2 of the report of the Secretary-General tells us that the situation in Afghanistan is deteriorating. The report gives several reasons for that, the most important among them being the lack of security and the fact that the results of Government and international assistance efforts have fallen short of the Afghan people's expectations. The report reaches the logical conclusion that the situation in Afghanistan cannot be addressed by military means alone, and it affirms the need for a political process based on comprehensive national reconciliation, as called for by President Karzai and, previously, by the country's legislature and most other Afghan leaders. It is important that this political process be accompanied by a parallel effort in the sphere of development, with a view to creating economic and social conditions that can provide a dignified life for all Afghans and that will not compel them to turn to illegal livelihoods such as drug trafficking. This would put an end to corruption and extremism and enable the Afghan Government to regain the people's trust in its ability to meet their needs. That requires a strong international commitment to support Afghanistan's development strategy.

Paragraph 23 of the report informs us that insurgents continued to expand their presence in previously stable areas. This is combined with the deteriorating security situation, the poor economic situation and the spread of unemployment and corruption. The situation demands a solution based on a comprehensive approach to addressing all of those problems.

The international community's ultimate goal must be to help the Afghan people build a democratic, stable and prosperous State. Combating extremism is not a goal in itself, especially because the use of force by itself will not bring about stability and security; it must be bolstered by a parallel dialogue aimed at achieving national reconciliation among all sectors of the Afghan people willing to engage in dialogue and accept the national constitution as a basis for governance.

My delegation remains gravely concerned about the killing of civilians in defiance of all the appeals and statements issued by Afghan authorities, by the United Nations and by other international bodies and organizations. In that context, we note that paragraph 66 of the report speaks of an increase in civilian casualties of 40 per cent over the figures for 2007. Thirty-nine per cent of these were caused by international and national Afghan forces. We reaffirm our conviction that this trend, if it continues, will not help establish peace, security or stability. It can only fuel animosity among Afghan citizens and will ultimately serve the interests of the opponents of the Government.

Libya expresses its deep concern over the food crisis that the Afghan people could face as a result of drought, as well as over rising food prices. We fear that the world financial crisis could exacerbate the food crisis in Afghanistan. We deeply regret the inadequate response to the $404 million appeal issued by the Vice-President of Afghanistan and the United Nations to address the crisis. We hope that the Afghanistan National Development Strategy will soon be implemented, and we hope that donors will fulfil the pledges they made at the 12 June 2008 Paris Conference.

The March 2008 report of the Secretary-General (S/2008/159) outlines human rights violations and instances of torture and abuse of detainees. It notes allegations of prolonged and arbitrary detention in places of detention run by international military forces and indicates that UNAMA was unable to assess those allegations. The report before us today makes no mention of any progress in that regard; rather, it notes that detention centres and prisons are in a serious state of neglect. My delegation wishes therefore to indicate its concern about the state of prisons in Afghanistan and to call for respect for human rights, international law and international human rights law.

Some progress has been made in a number of areas, including with respect to mine clearance, counter-narcotics and preparations for the upcoming elections. But shortcomings remain, despite all the efforts and pledges that have been made. We must study and review those shortcomings and try to identify their causes.

My delegation welcomes the progress that has been made in bilateral cooperation between Afghanistan and Pakistan, and we affirm the need to strengthen that cooperation, because of the historical, demographic and economic ties between the two countries.

Finally, Libya supports the Secretary-General's recommendation to extend the mandate of UNAMA and strengthen its role in coordinating international efforts, as well as to guarantee it sufficient resources and financing to enable it to establish regional offices to bolster its activities, especially in the fields of governance, justice and human rights.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I now give the floor to the representative of Afghanistan.

Mr. Tanin (Afghanistan): Allow me, Sir, to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for the month of March and to thank you for holding this debate. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his latest report (S/2009/135) on the situation in Afghanistan. I am also grateful to my friend, Mr. Kai Eide, for his comprehensive briefing here today and for his able leadership of the work of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). We have taken note of his important points, the suggestions that he has made and the concerns that he has raised.

The Security Council is discussing Afghanistan at an important time. In two days, the people of Afghanistan will celebrate our new year, so we begin

today from a new perspective of hope. The preparations for our presidential and provincial elections provide a chance to strengthen legitimacy and national unity. The continuing insecurity in parts of the country threatens those objectives but also gives us a clear goal in the coming months.

There has been a welcome increase in international focus on Afghanistan. Afghans are pleased to note the many recent strategic reviews and recommendations, including the upcoming conference to be held in The Hague on 31 March. We hope that that new spirit of engagement will help us proceed in a constructive, unified and coordinated way.

The international community should join Afghanistan in that spirit. In the past eight years, Afghanistan has made progress. We can continue to make progress. Afghans are fully invested in a legitimate, inclusive democratic process, and we see that in the strong engagement in the national debate surrounding the upcoming elections. Afghans want to ensure that their country's future is a continuation of the peaceful modernization that began in the early twentieth century.

Afghans are eager to work with the international community to eliminate the threat of the Taliban, Al-Qaida and other terrorist groups. The Taliban is not an organic part of Afghan society. It is a product of the violence, cross-border madrassas and foreign indoctrination that disrupted our stable society. Today, a mere 4 per cent of Afghans want to see the Taliban in power.

The international community should also be encouraged by the reminder that Afghans supported the United States-led intervention in 2001. Afghans welcomed the defeat of the terrorists and extremists who had invaded and corrupted our homeland. As long as the international forces provide safety, security and the promise of a democratic future, Afghans will continue to be staunch allies. But Afghans are simultaneously driven by the urgency of keeping the dark days securely behind us. The devastation of the Taliban is a constant reminder of the effects of neglecting the destruction of war. The greatest blunder of our time is to forget that the ruins of war breed angry, desperate and radicalized people.

The world has an obligation to act so that the Taliban and Al-Qaida do not return to power. That obligation is both moral and practical. Morally, the horrific abuse of civilians, particularly children and women, anywhere is a threat to freedom everywhere. In practical terms, terrorism knows no borders. Attacks in New York, London, Mumbai and Kabul by the same groups show that the threat in Afghanistan is, indeed, a global threat. Global action is the answer to a global threat.

Afghans have seen the significance of our partnership with the international community. Our biggest accomplishments — our constitution, the elections, the improvements in the Afghan National Army, infrastructure, education and health — are the projects that have received the strongest international commitment. International dedication bears fruit.

But we have only just begun. In the areas where Afghans received less international attention — the Afghan National Police, governance, corruption and judiciary reform — we have not achieved all we should. After the Bonn Conference in 2001, the international community's light-footprint approach brought minimal engagement in Afghanistan. We have only recently refocused, so we cannot expect results immediately. It takes time to build a stable, prosperous, democratic society after more than 30 years of war. Progress is a process, completed only over time. Thus, we must stay the course. There is still important work to be done.

That work should focus on the priority of a self-sustaining, functioning State that serves Afghans, for a functioning State is the strongest bulwark against terrorism. Only a democratic, stable Afghanistan will stop terror and destruction. Democracy should be strengthened, not weakened.

In strengthening the Afghan State, we must have a comprehensive strategy. Today, I would like to highlight a few areas for focus.

First, we should ensure that there are free, fair and transparent elections in August. That process should encourage a protective, inclusive debate that strengthens the legitimacy of the institutions that we have already created through the Bonn process.

Secondly, Afghan ownership must continue to be the linchpin of international efforts. We understand that the ultimate responsibility for our country lies in our own hands. We will do our own work. Therefore, economic development should continue to be implemented through the framework of the Afghanistan

National Development Strategy and the Paris priorities. We must ensure that aid and expertise are available promptly and delivered effectively, efficiently and transparently. Every penny in Afghanistan should be delivered to Afghans. We should also continue to build the Afghan army and police so that Afghans can take a stronger role in the fight against terror. There should be greater Afghan oversight over joint operations with our international partners and an increased focus on preventing civilian casualties.

We want to stress, too, that reconciliation can take place only under the leadership of the Afghan Government. The Government of Afghanistan recognizes the importance of a political solution. We negotiate with those elements of the Taliban who are willing to be reconciled, but any talks must be held with full respect for the constitution of Afghanistan and must be conducted from a position of strength.

Thirdly, Afghans appreciate the new regional focus on our challenges, which protects the sovereignty of our State. We welcome the new trilateral process involving the United States, Afghanistan and Pakistan that started recently in Washington, D.C., and we look forward to a future of increased cooperation. Our neighbours will be the first to benefit from a stable Afghanistan: fewer refugees, less narcotics, more trade.

Today, Afghans hope that the Security Council will continue its newly developed and refocused efforts to help us regain our footing after decades of war. Afghans still look with great hope to the international community and fully approve the extension of UNAMA's mandate in support of the Government of Afghanistan.

Despite the continued challenges of terrorism and violence, despite the critics, despite the resignation and despite the doubts, we know our better history. Afghanistan began its journey towards modernization in the 1900s. Our first constitution, in 1924, made modern education available to all. By the 1960s, we guaranteed equal rights for men and women. Afghans then survived and persevered through three decades of foreign intervention, a bloody civil war and the brutal rule of the Taliban. If we could do all of that, we can succeed in Afghanistan today, for Afghanistan has been, can be and will be once again a peaceful, democratic crossroads of our region and a contributing member of the world community. We begin the new year in that spirit of hope.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now call on the representative of Canada.

Mr. McNee (Canada): I thank you, Mr. President, for the opportunity to speak on this important subject. Canada continues to support the Government and the people of Afghanistan in forging a stable country and a peaceful future. I would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for his honest and insightful briefing today and for his deep commitment to Afghanistan and the United Nations Mission.

Canada also welcomes the Secretary-General's recent report (S/2009/135), which offers a frank assessment of the situation. The report outlines some of the progress made, with Afghans and the international community working together to strengthen institutions, fight terrorism, stem narcotics production and improve lives by providing education, health services and agricultural assistance.

For its part, Canada has restructured its own efforts — military and civilian — to focus on six priority areas with clear objectives, making our engagement more focused and effective. We view those priorities as key to the progressive transfer of authority to Afghans.

In particular, Canada is helping to improve the capabilities of the Afghan national security forces. We are also continuing to rehabilitate the Dahla dam and irrigation system in Kandahar, which will improve the lives of thousands of Kandahari farmers and their families, and we are building and rehabilitating schools. Canada has also facilitated an Afghan-Pakistani dialogue on border security, and we are working with the United Nations to help Afghans to prepare for the presidential and provincial council elections this year.

The Secretary-General reminds us of the many challenges ahead, including rising violence and widespread corruption. Those challenges must continue to be met by the Afghan people, the Afghan Government and the international community with determination, unity of purpose and a will to act swiftly.

Canada welcomes Special Representative Eide's pledge to strengthen the United Nations presence throughout the country. In our view, that means strengthening existing regional and provincial offices and opening new ones where necessary.

Canada looks forward to positive results stemming from the new integrated approach, which brings the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), the Government of Afghanistan and others together in the planning and coordination of security, development and governance initiatives in key districts. Canada stands ready to work closely with UNAMA on that new approach. We are also committed to working with Special Representative Eide to ensure that UNAMA continues to deliver on its mandate, fulfilling its role as adviser, coordinator and leader of the civilian international mission.

In that context, we note with appreciation UNAMA's progress over the past year in streamlining coordination structures in Kabul, as well as in creating an aid-effectiveness unit. We also look forward to enhanced coordination on the ground to ensure that immediate humanitarian needs are met effectively. UNAMA's mandate is sufficiently robust to address the challenges that Afghanistan faces, and its increased resources will now allow for more action. We look forward to receiving regular reports on the progress that UNAMA is accomplishing in implementing its mandate.

The Government of Afghanistan, UNAMA and the international community must now demonstrate results to the people of Afghanistan in order to restore their faith in their own institutions and in their own capacity to build a better future.

In order to demonstrate those results, the United Nations must ensure a strong presence throughout Afghanistan. That is particularly important in the area of humanitarian assistance. Canada welcomes the deployment of additional United Nations humanitarian officers to Kabul and hopes that that will soon be followed by a reinforcement of the United Nations humanitarian presence in the provinces, where it is most needed. To maintain credibility with the Afghan people, the United Nations must broaden its reach and ensure the timely and appropriate delivery of humanitarian aid.

Expanded civilian-led humanitarian action — notably in aid delivery — is increasingly challenging, given the rise in violent incidents involving civilians and the targeting of civilian aid workers. Advocating for international humanitarian law and the importance of respecting humanitarian space will remain a priority.

In that respect, we urge increased coordination among the United Nations, ISAF, the Government of Afghanistan and the international community. Full, safe and unhindered humanitarian access throughout Afghanistan for neutral and impartial humanitarian actors is critical to ensuring that emergency needs can be met.

The Secretary-General has noted that 2009 is a critical year for Afghanistan, with the upcoming elections of particular significance. The international community has a crucial role to play in helping Afghans to conduct those elections. Successful elections will be a result of national and international coordination and cooperation, including international monitoring, as well as voter access and security. First and foremost, in cooperation with the Independent Electoral Commission, we must help to ensure that the elections are credible in the eyes of the Afghan people.

The Secretary-General has noted some encouraging news in Afghanistan: institutions are being strengthened, and the Afghan National Army is being expanded and is becoming more autonomous. The fight against illegal narcotics is progressing, with the crop of poppies expected to be reduced substantially this year. That is indeed heartening, but the fight against narcotics production must not end with poppy eradication. It is also important to emphasize alternative livelihood programmes to provide increasingly diverse economic opportunities.

(*spoke in French*)

Canada is working with the Afghan Government, the United Nations, ISAF and the international community to resolve the many problems still threatening Afghanistan. Most of those problems, including narcotics and the lack of legitimate economic opportunities, can be sustainably addressed only through regional cooperation.

We welcome the fact that the international community recognizes the regional dimension of the challenges facing Afghanistan. We urge all regional partners to cooperate on economic and security issues as a top priority. Given the challenges facing Pakistan, mutual efforts by Afghanistan's neighbours are more essential than ever to the stability of the region. Canada would appreciate greater United Nations leadership on regional coordination issues, as such coordination is essential to the coherence of regional and international efforts.

The efforts of the international community are aimed at helping the Afghan Government to assume responsibility for rebuilding the country. Afghans must be able to have confidence in their institutions and their Government. In order to inspire and nourish such hope, the international community's efforts must be swift, effective, ambitious and responsible.

Finally, Canada takes this opportunity to commend the hard work and dedication of United Nations personnel and other civilian workers in Afghanistan. Their courage and commitment in the face of dangerous working conditions is a source of inspiration. Permit me to conclude by reaffirming Canada's commitment to the people of Afghanistan and to the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Czech Republic.

Mr. Kaiser (Czech Republic): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU). The candidate countries Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Montenegro and Serbia; as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia align themselves with this statement.

Allow me to begin by thanking Mr. Kai Eide, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his briefing, his excellent leadership of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and his cooperation with the EU Special Representative, Mr. Sequi. I would like to also extend my thanks to Ambassador Tanin, the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, for his contribution to today's debate.

The EU commends the Secretary-General for his recent comprehensive report on the UNAMA mission in Afghanistan and the identification of priorities (S/2009/135). The EU endorses the recommendations on UNAMA and the strengthening of its central role in coordinating the overall international efforts in close cooperation with other partners, including the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and the EU.

The EU also welcomes the fact that the report of the Secretary-General will be submitted every three months. Additionally, the EU fully supports the crucial coordinating role of UNAMA and its head, Mr. Kai Eide. In this regard, and due to the forthcoming presidential and provincial elections, the EU supports the extension of the UNAMA mandate for a further 12 months, as suggested by the Secretary-General in his report.

The year 2009 will be crucial for Afghanistan and for the engagement of the international community. The security situation in Afghanistan remains challenging, with insurgents increasingly employing asymmetric tactics and targeting civilians, Government institutions, international aid organizations and non-governmental organizations. Despite these challenges, some important progress has been made, and the EU reiterates its long-term commitment to working towards a better future for Afghanistan and its people.

In this regard, we support efforts by the Government of Afghanistan to reach out across the political spectrum to build a broad-based political settlement. Politically led solutions based on dialogue and settlement are key to achieving a durable solution in Afghanistan. The EU welcomes efforts by the Government to bring disaffected Afghans into society's mainstream.

Over the past year, we have seen progress in the strengthening of the Afghan National Army and the Afghan National Police, the launch of the Afghan National Development Strategy and positive developments regarding economic and social development. Nevertheless, the international community needs to devote greater efforts to ensuring better and more effective coordination of development and reconstruction activities throughout the whole of Afghanistan. Coordinated and effective support to the build-up of the Afghan national security forces is a key element. It is also of crucial importance to strengthen Government institutions and actively combat corruption. Even a legitimate Government will face challenges with a weak State and poor governance. There is no stability without sustainable governance.

While the narcotics trade still poses a continuing cause for concern, the EU welcomes the fact that, after reaching another record level in 2007, poppy cultivation was in decline this past year and a further decrease is expected in 2009. The prognosis of a 20 to 30 per cent decrease in opium production indicates a potential increase in the number of poppy-free provinces to 22. Also, the reinforced international

cooperation in controlling the chemical precursor needed to produce heroin contributes to the fight against drug trafficking. The EU also encourages the Afghan Government, with the assistance of the international community, to accelerate the implementation of the National Drug Control Strategy, including through alternative livelihood programmes.

The main challenges Afghanistan will face over the next year are the forthcoming elections, which are essential to further political development. It is important that the elections reaffirm the Afghan people's faith in their future. In this regard, we support efforts by the Afghan Government to reach out across the political spectrum to build a broad-based political settlement.

The EU attaches the greatest importance to the holding of free and inclusive elections in Afghanistan and welcomes the confirmation of the date of presidential and provincial elections by the Independent Electoral Commission. It is now up to the Afghan authorities, all the political parties and other stakeholders to work for transparent, fair and credible elections in order to ensure the legitimacy of the next Government and provide it with a strong mandate.

EU Special Representative Sequi will continue to monitor political and security developments, and the EU is willing to work alongside the Afghan Government, the United Nations and ISAF to support elections across the country, including by providing substantial financial assistance and, subject to security and other conditions being met, through the deployment of an electoral observation mission. During the period from 22 May to the inauguration of the next presidential term, stability, security and a functioning Government must be ensured.

On behalf of the EU, I would like to underline its continued engagement in Afghanistan, including through the bilateral cooperation programmes of EU member States and the European Commission assistance strategy. The EU is looking urgently at how to enhance and improve its engagement. The EU is the second largest financial contributor. The collective pledged contribution of the EU amounts to €8 billion for reconstruction during the period 2001-2010. The European Commission has pledged €700 million for Afghanistan from 2007 to 2010, and member States currently provide approximately half of ISAF troops.

The EU is strongly committed to the improvement of Afghan State structures and has channelled approximately 30 per cent of its assistance budget through multi-donor trust funds, such as the Afghan Reconstruction Trust Fund and the Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan, which essentially contribute to the reconstruction of the Afghan police forces.

In the framework of its comprehensive approach towards Afghanistan, the EU launched an EU police mission in Afghanistan in mid-June 2007. The mission includes contributions from non-member States Norway, Canada, New Zealand and Croatia. The mission aims at contributing to the establishment of sustainable and effective civilian policing arrangements under Afghan ownership and in accordance with international standards. More particularly, the mission monitors, mentors, advises and trains at the level of the Afghan Ministry of Interior, regions and provinces. The area of deployment includes Kabul and some 15 provinces of Afghanistan.

The EU would like to reaffirm its long-term commitment to contribute to peace, security and development in line with its mandate, supporting the development of the Afghan police under local ownership. In this regard, it decided to significantly and progressively increase the number of mission personnel starting in December 2008, which will enable the mission, on the basis of a renewed mandate, to reinforce its activities in support of the Afghan National Police and contribute to its reform. However, this will require additional resources from contributing States.

The European Union is committed to the improvement of governance and the rule of law in Afghanistan and reiterates its commitment to capacity-building in the justice and rule of law sectors. The fight against corruption, impunity and human rights violations, especially violence against women, is central to good governance, and the European Union looks to the Afghan authorities to uphold the fundamental rights guaranteed by the Constitution of Afghanistan and under international law. In this regard, the European Union encourages UNAMA to pursue its monitoring mandate, in particular with regard to the human rights situation of women.

Regarding the grave humanitarian situation in Afghanistan, the European Union welcomes the strengthened presence of the Office for the

Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Afghanistan in order to further improve humanitarian coordination. The European Union underlines the importance of freedom of expression and diverse media in Afghanistan and, in this regard, calls upon the Afghan Government to pass the media law approved by the lower house of the parliament.

It is certain that stability and security in Afghanistan are closely linked to overall regional stability. The European Union strongly supports the development of a coordinated approach at the regional level and enhanced cooperation between Afghanistan and its neighbours against threats such as terrorism and drug trafficking. The European Union calls upon the neighbouring countries to constructively work together to ensure sustainable development embedded in a stable region.

Fostering stability in Afghanistan is in the interest of all countries in the region and the wider international community. In this respect, the European Union welcomes the upcoming Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan, to be held in Islamabad, and the Outreach Session of the Ministerial Meeting of the Group of Eight (G-8), to be held in Trieste on 26 and 27 June 2009. The European Union also welcomes the conference entitled "International Conference on Afghanistan: a Comprehensive Strategy in a Regional Context", to take place in The Hague on 31 March.

In closing my remarks, I would like to assure the Council that the European Union will continue to play an active role in supporting Afghanistan, in close cooperation and coordination with other international actors on the ground, including the United Nations.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): Unfortunately, time is running out, and I therefore request all delegations to limit their statements to five minutes in length.

I now give the floor to the representative of Norway.

Mr. Wetland (Norway): Thank you, Sir, for this opportunity to speak.

The situation in Afghanistan must be judged against the depths from which that country is emerging. Honouring its commitments made at the Paris Conference last year, Norway remains fully committed to rebuilding Afghanistan. At the Conference, Norway pledged some $650 million for the time period covered by the Afghan National Development Strategy. More than 600 Norwegian men and women in uniform are helping to bring security to the people of Afghanistan and to train the Afghan National Army. No other country receives more development assistance from Norway and no other country is seeing more Norwegian military and development personnel. That is the measure of our commitment to Afghanistan.

We thank Special Representative Kai Eide for his leadership and for his forceful presentation here today. The report of the Secretary-General (S/2009/135) also presents a precise picture of the many challenges we are facing. We share the concern that the Taliban is destabilizing previously stable areas and is showing increased disregard for civilian lives.

But we must look beyond the horrific incidents of violence and see the long-term achievements that form the building blocks of a better Afghanistan. To mention a few of the positive trends, Afghan security forces, trained by their international partners, have increased their reach, poppy production has been curbed in many parts of the country, and the Government and donors are working together to energize the agricultural sector.

I would like to raise three issues here today: elections, the situation of women and our joint international effort.

First, with regard to elections, free and fair elections are to be held in August. The next six months will test Afghan democracy. Well over 4 million voters were registered earlier this year, and 1.6 million of these new voters are women. They come in addition to the nearly 12 million voters already registered. Some argue that Afghanistan is not ready for democracy. The more than 4 million Afghans who recently registered clearly think that Afghanistan is ready and that they should have their say. There must be no doubt in the mind of any Afghan that elections will be held as scheduled by the Independent Electoral Commission. Norway has supported the election process with $12 million given through the United Nations Development Programme. Freedom of expression, media and assembly must be guaranteed to ensure free and fair elections.

Secondly, the situation of women overall in Afghanistan has taken a worrying turn for the worse. We remember the story of Latefa, who had acid thrown

in her face while on her way to school but who said that the attack would not stop her from learning. The most senior policewoman in Kandahar was killed before she could become a role model to many young girls. Women's rights are enshrined in the Afghan Constitution, but it takes political leadership to protect those rights. Increasingly, the men of Afghanistan must change their mindset, too, and, increasingly, luckily, they understand that their children lose opportunities when they grow up with illiterate mothers. Poor countries remain poor when they repress women, and Afghanistan will not succeed without the active participation of its women.

Thirdly, I recently conducted an Internet search for the website of the Afghan National Development Strategy. What I found was a page telling me that the site was under construction. Nearly a year after the Paris Conference, that still seems true for the Strategy itself. Both we the donors and the Afghan Government need to work still harder to fulfil the pledges we made in Paris. We must explain what we are doing and let ourselves be coordinated. The Afghan Government must fulfil its pledge to fight corruption and narcotics.

The coordinating role of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) is central to our efforts in Afghanistan. UNAMA will play a crucial role in supporting the elections ahead of us. We welcome the extension of UNAMA's mandate. We pay tribute to the men and women of UNAMA and will continue to support their vital mission.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I next give the floor to the representative of Germany.

Mr. Ney (Germany): I would like to join my colleagues in thanking Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his report (S/2009/135) and Special Representative Kai Eide for today's briefing. In addition, I would like to thank in particular Ambassador Tanin for his intervention.

Germany fully supports the statement of the presidency of the European Union and shares the analysis it presented on the situation in Afghanistan. As an important contributor to civilian reconstruction and development programmes for Afghanistan and as a major troop contributor to the United Nations-mandated International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) operations, Germany would like to highlight four points.

First, the electoral process in Afghanistan is an important step for consolidating democratic development in Afghanistan. The international community, in particular through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), is successfully supporting the Independent Electoral Commission in preparing these elections. We are looking with keen interest to the political process in Kabul to ensure a stable environment for the upcoming elections. We trust that our Afghan partners will work to ensure a viable and stable process that leads the country from May to August.

Germany has continuously supported the United Nations Development Programme Enhancing Legal and Electoral Capacity for Tomorrow project by donating $10 million in 2008. Germany will provide an additional $12 million for that programme in 2009. Especially with regard to the election process, security remains a critical concern. In that context, Germany will, as indicated earlier, increase the number of troops on the ground in order to assist in safeguarding free and fair elections in Afghanistan. Germany strongly condemns recent attacks on political candidates in Afghanistan.

With regard to the wider build-up of Afghan national security forces, Germany has again stepped up its efforts in police training by providing additional trainers and mentoring teams and has recently begun the implementation of the Focused District Development programme in Mazar-e-Sharif. We intend to further expand focused district development to other districts in the course of this year.

Secondly, Afghan ownership and good governance remain key for the success of the efforts of the international community in supporting development in Afghanistan. We encourage the Afghan Government to fight corruption and the trade and production of narcotic drugs with further increased dedication.

Thirdly, Germany will continue to support reconstruction and development in Afghanistan. The year 2009 is seeing yet another increase in German contributions, to $220 million overall. We strongly believe that UNAMA must continue to play the leading role in coordinating all the civilian efforts of the international community, as agreed last summer in Paris. In that respect, we strongly support the process of the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board as the core consulting mechanism. As a major contributor to

the United Nations budget, we openly supported the considerable increase of UNAMA's budget for 2009, and we are looking forward to seeing tangible results.

Against that background, Germany fully supports the extension of the UNAMA mandate and welcomes the increase in UNAMA personnel on the ground. We are pleased to note that, from our point of view, the increased presence of UNAMA in the regions already starts to add value including in the areas of Mazar-e-Sharif, Kunduz and Faizabad.

Fourthly and finally, we would like to emphasize the importance of a regional approach to solving the problems we are facing, not only in Afghanistan, and we encourage an increased level of cooperation in all fields. That cooperation remains essential for a peaceful and sustainable future for Afghanistan and will thus benefit the development of the whole region.

Against that background, we are looking forward to the conference to be held in The Hague later this month as an opportunity to signal the readiness of the international community to continue its support for Afghanistan and the region.

Let me conclude by thanking Kai Eide for his tireless efforts and his successful leadership of UNAMA. The international community and Afghanistan have come a long way. Despite all the challenges ahead, we have been able to help improve living conditions in Afghanistan and to build schools for boys and girls, hospitals, bridges, streets, et cetera.

That success was only possible thanks to all of the women and men from all over the world who are willing to serve in Afghanistan. Let me seize this opportunity to thank them all for their relentless efforts and their personal commitment. We would like to thank all the teams working under the umbrella of UNAMA, including UNDP and OCHA, as well as the many non-governmental organizations, members of the diplomatic corps and, last but not least, all personnel of the security forces for their efforts to improve the life of the Afghan people. Germany will live up to its international responsibilities and continue to support the Afghan people.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Netherlands.

Mr. de Klerk (Netherlands): Thank you, Mr. President, for allowing the Netherlands to take the floor in this important debate on the situation in Afghanistan. We fully align ourselves with the statement made by our colleague from the Czech Republic on behalf of the European Union. In the light of our longstanding commitment to Afghanistan, allow me to make a few additional remarks, in particular on the international conference on Afghanistan to be held in The Hague on 31 March, to which many have referred in this debate.

Before turning to the conference, let me re-emphasize our appreciation of and continued support for the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) under the able leadership of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kai Eide. We welcome his presence here and his comprehensive and inspiring briefing today. We cannot overemphasize our collective responsibility to provide the Special Representative with the support that he needs to enable UNAMA to fulfil its broad mandate as defined by the Security Council.

We are particularly pleased that UNAMA has established a presence in Uruzgan province, where the Netherlands, together with other partners, is providing significant assistance and cooperation, both development and military. We see UNAMA's presence in Uruzgan as recognition of the progress achieved by the Afghan authorities together with international partners and hope it will further contribute to the development of stronger civilian structures in the south and to increased capacity of the Afghan authorities in that area. In Uruzgan and elsewhere in Afghanistan, the Netherlands is guided by the principle that development, diplomacy and defence must go hand in hand.

In our view, the Afghan authorities and the international community, with a central role for the United Nations, are all set in place to make progress towards our common objectives of security and development, increasingly under Afghan ownership and leadership. But we are also mindful that the security situation, economic development, governance, the rule of law and the humanitarian situation all continue to pose challenges. And we recognize that the regional dimension needs to be addressed. In that respect, we welcome the initiative of the Pakistani and Japanese Governments regarding the conference on Pakistan to be held in Tokyo next month.

Many speakers have referred to the upcoming elections and the crucial importance of the coming

years for Afghanistan. It is against this background that the Netherlands has agreed, after consultations with Afghanistan and the United Nations, to host the "International Conference on Afghanistan: A comprehensive strategy in a regional context", to be held in The Hague on 31 March 2009. We are truly honoured that President Karzai and Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon will address the conference, together with Prime Minister Balkenende of the Netherlands, and that subsequently Special Representative Eide, Afghan Foreign Minister Spantâ and Dutch Foreign Minister Verhagen will co-chair the ensuing ministerial discussions.

The Government of Afghanistan and the United Nations are closely involved in the preparations, which are ongoing as we speak. It is our hope that the conference will reaffirm the solid and long-term commitment of the international community, as defined during the Bonn, London, and Paris conferences, to shaping a better future for Afghanistan and its people. We share the view of Special Representative Eide that the conference will provide a timely opportunity to take a comprehensive look at the current political, security and development situation in Afghanistan and will thereby give new impetus to our common efforts.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the representative of Italy.

Mr. Cornado (Italy): I wish to thank Ambassador Kai Eide, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, for his frank, complete and thoughtful briefing on the situation in Afghanistan. I agree with the points made to that effect by Ambassador Tanin, the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan. Italy fully supports the statement delivered by the Permanent Representative of the Czech Republic on behalf of the European Union. I would like to add just a few remarks drawing on our national experience and our civil and military commitment to Afghanistan.

First of all, let me reaffirm my country's full support for the leading role of the United Nations in coordinating the overall international effort in Afghanistan in order to ensure greater aid effectiveness, transparency and secure Afghan ownership. We share the Secretary-General's assessment that the current mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the 2009 budget provide the Mission with the necessary tools to implement the tasks assigned to it by this Council and reaffirmed by the Paris Conference of June 2008. We therefore concur with the Secretary-General's recommendation to extend UNAMA's present mandate for a further 12 months.

The first priority in 2009 — a critical test year — is to hold free, fair and inclusive presidential and provincial elections in accordance with the Afghan Constitution. These elections are essential to winning back the hearts and minds of the people and to ensuring that the next Afghan Government has legitimacy and a solid mandate. We thus welcome the Independent Electoral Commission's confirmation that the election will be held in August 2009, and we encourage the Afghan institutions to find a solution in order to ensure a functioning Government between 22 May and the inauguration of the next president. My Government has already made a contribution to the United Nations Development Programme Enhancing Legal and Electoral Capacity for Tomorrow, and will also provide support for security on the ground through our participation in the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF).

The many challenges facing Afghanistan and the broader region require renewed international engagement, a comprehensive approach and a long-term commitment to working with the people and institutions of the country. Overall security has deteriorated in the past month and the insurgency has staged stronger attacks. In his report (S/2009/135), the Secretary-General has identified two disturbing trends on the rise: attempts to destabilize new areas and increased use of more sophisticated and asymmetric attacks by the insurgents, with an increasing cost in civilian lives. The announced military surge should help to provide better security, ensure free and fair elections and create a safe environment for good governance and development.

We should also continue to use every means possible to further reduce civilian casualties. ISAF has done a great deal in this respect through improved tactical guidelines and transparency. We should also increase Afghan ownership and responsibility in military action.

Simply increasing the military effort, however, will not be enough. We must step up the international community's assistance to the Afghan authorities in strengthening their military and police forces through

training, mentoring and empowerment. Italy already has six operational mentoring liaison teams embedded in various Afghan National Army units, and a seventh will be fielded shortly. Through our Carabinieri, we also provide training and support for the reconstruction of the Afghanistan National Police. Italy is also one of the largest contributors to the European Union Police Mission in Afghanistan, and the Italian Government is considering further contributions.

Military efforts must be complemented by stepping up civilian and economic assistance. Our interventions are directed to the health and infrastructure sectors and to other cross-cutting areas, such as women's rights, assistance to refugees and internally displaced persons, food security, demining and fighting child trafficking. We are also committed to improving governance in Afghanistan and to building up the civil administration capacity of the country at the central and local levels.

We followed with great interest the remarks made by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, especially on the recent positive developments in the crucial sector of governance. The Special Representative again highlighted the importance of cooperation between key elements inside the Government, which has improved such critical sectors as security, finance, agriculture and commerce.

Our efforts in the justice and rule of law sector since the initial post-conflict phase are well known. The full programming sequence and planned implementation of an Afghan national justice programme remain of crucial importance. Coordinated action by all relevant Afghan institutions is needed in all the provinces.

The situation in Afghanistan is a regional issue. To an increasing and more urgent extent, it therefore requires an inclusive approach. We thus welcome the ongoing efforts of the Government of Afghanistan and its neighbouring and regional partners to foster trust among and cooperation with each other. Following previous G8 presidencies, Italy wishes to continually reinforce the G8's engagement in favour of Afghanistan. To this end, we intend to organize a ministerial outreach meeting with the participation of partners, neighbouring countries and other key stakeholders, to be held in Trieste on 26 and 27 June. We intend to focus attention on four areas in which multilateral cooperation is significant and should be further enhanced: border management, drug trafficking and money-laundering, cross-border projects and confidence-building measures at the civil society level.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I call on the representative of India.

Mr. Sen (India): I thank you, Sir, for scheduling today's debate on Afghanistan and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). This is of immediate and abiding interest to India. We also welcome the latest report of the Secretary-General (S/2009/135), while thanking Special Representative Kai Eide for his comprehensive briefing.

The latest report paints a bleak picture of the situation in Afghanistan. We accept these facts. We cannot but recognize that the Afghan people continue to be confronted by the twin challenges of deteriorating security and a sense that the peace dividend is being reduced. At the same time, the international community is simultaneously challenged by a renewed security challenge from the Taliban and Al-Qaida and by increasingly vocal questions over the utility of our collective effort.

And yet the report also holds out elements of hope. We see steady progress in the United Nations effort to ensure greater coordination and cohesion in our aid and assistance programmes. It also praises efforts to reform the Ministry of Interior and the police, the work of the various economic ministries and the steady gains in reducing poppy production. It also notes as a sign of progress the fact that the Independent Electoral Commission of Afghanistan will organize the forthcoming elections.

Furthermore, the fact that elections are being contested hotly is a good augury. We are hopeful that the elections will be free, fair and transparent and that the Afghan people will exercise their rights in such a manner. At the same time, we in the international community must ensure that, during the run-up to the elections, the gains secured collectively in Afghanistan are built up, not eroded in any manner. In that context, we condemn today's terrorist attack on representatives of the Afghan people.

While the report, in our view, correctly identifies these positive developments as a window of opportunity to consolidate progress, there is a need to address misgivings over our collective purpose. Let us be clear — the world cannot afford to abandon

Afghanistan again. Despite the strains, this mission remains vital not only to the aspirations of the long-suffering Afghan people, but to the security and stability of the region and beyond. Doubts, hesitation and divergences in our approach to the Taliban and Al-Qaida weaken our collective will. They also invigorate our foe. Therefore, apart from continued application of force wherever terrorist groups are active, we must work together to deny them safe havens, financing and political and material sustenance, whether within Afghanistan or across its borders. The application of force wherever terrorists gather must harmonize with the larger political objective, and UNAMA must play an important role in this essentially political task. Since messaging is important, it is also essential to have greater clarity regarding the ideas being discussed in the public domain. Reconciliation is one of these.

The Secretary-General's latest report subjects this discussion to important caveats. Not the least of these is the idea that reconciliation must be an Afghan-led process, within the parametres of the Constitution of the land. Further, it must be pursued from a position of political and military strength. To this, I would add that the process needs to be undertaken with strategic clarity and unity of purpose. In the absence of consensus amongst concerned international parties over the key questions of reconciliation — with whom and how — such a process runs the risk of opening up divisions amongst us, rather than amongst the elements with whom we seek to reconcile. Furthermore, we must move beyond attempts to distinguish between "good" and "bad" Taliban; such efforts are totally unworkable.

From this standpoint, it is helpful that the international effort is moving towards a more cohesive and integrated approach. We fully endorse the notion that coordination must be based on genuine Afghan leadership and on recognition of the fact that there is no purely military solution. It is precisely for this reason that India strongly supports efforts to build Afghan capacity. It is not only appropriate but essential to invest in such capacity. Without this, we run the risk of assigning responsibility without ensuring that our partners have the means to shoulder it.

In this context, India welcomes the continuation of the useful role provided last year to UNAMA via resolution 1806 (2008). We see that as a logical corollary of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy, adopted formally last year, which is a guidemap for the international assistance effort in Afghanistan. UNAMA and the Government of Afghanistan have made commendable progress together since UNAMA received that new mandate, and it is essential to build upon those first promising signs resolutely. That effort needs to be supported with greater resources for the United Nations Mission and with greater commitment to alleviating the humanitarian challenge in Afghanistan, especially given the impact of rising food prices and adverse climatic events. India is working to mitigate the humanitarian impact, including through our recent decision to send a quarter of a million tons of wheat to Afghanistan, although, most regrettably, we continue to face political difficulties in overland transport and transit to Afghanistan.

Taking those points as a reference, I should like to underscore India's firm and unshakeable commitment to the international effort in Afghanistan. For India, the stabilization of Afghanistan is integrally connected with our security. It is for that reason that while we are outraged by attacks upon our people and symbols of our friendship with Afghanistan, we cannot be deterred by such criminal acts. Not only has our commitment to Afghanistan exceeded $1.2 billion, but we have attempted to the best of our ability to expand the range and variety of our projects. Thus, Indian assistance spans the gamut of operations from infrastructure projects, such as the Zaranj-Delaram highway, to institutions, such as the parliament building in Kabul. We have also simultaneously targeted local projects that will provide a peace dividend in the shortest possible period of time, ranging from cold storage plants to equipment for schools and hospitals. Through these efforts, we maintain capacity-building as a core element of our work in Afghanistan. It is in support of that core task that India has agreed to increase the current allocation of 500 seats each in capacity-building and scholarship programmes.

Turning to the regional aspect, we need greater efforts to embed the stabilization of Afghanistan within regional processes for this country to regain its key role as the crossroads of South, West and Central Asia — a phrase that was also used in the statement today by the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan. That includes regional economic processes, such as the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation. Such efforts are in the collective interest of the entire region. Hindering that not only affects Afghanistan, but equally each of us

in the region. We therefore need efforts to expand, rather than hinder, trade, transit — especially transit in that context, as I mentioned earlier — and transport ties. That is, in our view, the best way of bringing the regional dimension into the discourse on Afghanistan.

In conclusion, India believes that challenges in Afghanistan need to be seen in their totality. We must analyse where we are today from the perspective of the past eight years. Every step forward has been hard won but each step is a measure of distance away from the destruction of the past. It is for that reason that we must continue to emphasize the progress achieved, rather than bemoan the challenges that remain. It is also for that reason that we should set our sights on realistic and achievable goals, not expectations that are unrealistic in the local context. If we are truly committed to an Afghan-led process of prioritization of tasks, we should concentrate on where Afghanistan has come from rather than on where we individually would like it to be.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the representative of Australia.

Mr. Goledzinowski (Australia): Australia is grateful for the opportunity to participate in this debate. In the interests of time, I will skip some parts of my distributed statement. We agree with the Secretary-General's report (S/2009/135), and with other speakers that have referenced it, that 2009 will be a critical year in Afghanistan. Ensuring the credible conduct of elections will be important for demonstrating that Afghanistan's emerging democracy will not be disrupted by the Taliban insurgency.

Australia welcomes the August date for elections announced by the Afghan Independent Electoral Commission. That timing provides an opportunity for the necessary logistical preparations to be carried out to allow the people of Afghanistan to exercise their democratic right. We also support efforts to find a solution to constitutional issues in a manner that would ensure the legitimacy and stability of government until the inauguration. Moreover, we are committed to supporting the conduct of the elections. We recently announced $3 million for the United Nations Development Programme to establish an independent electoral complaints commission, and we had previously supported the electoral registration.

Afghanistan and its international partners face enormous challenges, as outlined eloquently by the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan. Improving security is critical to reconstruction and development. That will require the Afghan Government forces to take the lead. To assist that, Australia has provided an operational mentoring and liaison team to Afghanistan.

Political reconciliation and, ultimately, a political settlement will also be critical elements of a lasting and durable solution for Afghanistan. Constructive engagement by regional countries will be very important.

But Australia also recognizes the magnitude of the humanitarian challenges in Afghanistan, and we are doing our bit — some 600 million dollars' worth since 2001. I would particularly highlight the work that is being done by my compatriots in the areas of mine action and also through the food assistance being delivered by the World Food Programme.

We welcome the importance attached in the Secretary-General's report to ensuring that development assistance is applied intelligently according to coordinated and comprehensive plans with clear goals. In that context, Australia very much values the efforts of Special Representative Kai Eide and his team in the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) to achieve better unity of effort in international donor activity. Australia stands ready to be coordinated.

We also support the expansion of UNAMA's reach through new provincial offices. That sends a clear signal of the United Nations commitment to provide more direct assistance through programmes and outreach at the community level, where help is most needed. We particularly welcome the opening of an UNAMA provincial office in Oruzgan, where our military and civilian personnel are deployed. We look forward to working with the new office to improve conditions in that part of southern Afghanistan.

Australia will, of course, participate in the Afghan conference to be held in The Hague. That meeting will be a key opportunity to look critically at what is working and what is not in Afghanistan and how we can make our collective efforts more effective. We welcome the United Nations role in co-chairing the meeting, and, of course, we thank the Netherlands, our valued partners in Oruzgan, for hosting it.

Australia strongly supports UNAMA and the extension of its mandate. We will need to continue to

ensure that this operation is properly resourced. We also wish to record our deep appreciation for the invaluable efforts of Mr. Kai Eide and for his leadership of his courageous team at UNAMA. Continued progress in Afghanistan depends on strengthened and expanded engagement by the United Nations and the international community, in concert with the Government and the people of Afghanistan.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I am very grateful to the representative of Australia for having shortened his statement.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Al Habib (Islamic Republic of Iran): Allow me, Sir, to thank you for having convened this meeting and to congratulate you on your skilful stewardship of the Council's work this month. I also thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kai Eide, and his colleagues in the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) for their valuable and tireless efforts in Afghanistan at this crucial juncture. As we have stressed in the past, the Islamic Republic of Iran supports the central role of the United Nations in Afghanistan, and that commitment has been displayed yet again in the recent fruitful visit of Mr. Kai Eide to Tehran.

We have carefully studied the latest report of the Secretary-General on Afghanistan (S/2009/135) and share the view that the year 2009 is very important for Afghanistan and for its partners in the international community. In the past several years, many efforts have been made by Afghan officials and the Afghan people, assisted by the international community, to foster and strengthen their newly established democratic mechanisms, to bring about peace, stability and development and to take their destiny into their own hands. Undoubtedly, much has been accomplished. Yet, a great deal more remains to be achieved.

We are concerned that, despite all the efforts made, insecurity has increased over the past two years in Afghanistan, and terrorist activities, which are perpetrated mostly by Al-Qaida and the Taliban, have inflicted many losses and costs on the great nation of Afghanistan.

Heightened insecurity, poppy cultivation, drug production, drug trafficking, a spike in food and commodity prices and the consequences of drought are among the challenges that Afghanistan continues to face today. As the report at hand indicates, 2008 ended as the most violent year in Afghanistan since 2001, and the attempts by extremists and terrorists to destabilize previously stable areas have, unfortunately, worsened.

Nevertheless, we are confident that despite the gravity and magnitude of the various challenges facing them, our Afghan brothers and sisters will maintain their commendable efforts to seriously address these threats and will continue their journey towards peace, stability and development. If history is any guide, as grave as these challenges are, they will not be able to break the determination of the Afghan people and Government, who are resolutely striving to surmount these problems.

As an immediate neighbour with deep historical, religious and cultural ties with our Afghan brothers and sisters, we share and feel their pain in their difficult times as we share their joys in their successes. We have a vital interest in an Afghanistan that is stable, secure and prosperous — an Afghanistan at peace with itself and with its neighbours.

In our view, incorporating terrorist elements into the political structure of Afghanistan runs counter to the agreement reached among the members of the international community and will in no way help to resolve the current situation. Categorizing extremists as "good" or "bad" is not helpful. Any efforts to bring about reconciliation should be purely Afghan-led and under the full control and ownership of the Afghan Government. In addition, only those groups that recognize, respect and adhere to the constitution of Afghanistan can be considered in that process.

We believe that if the insecurity in Afghanistan is to be effectively addressed, more serious and concrete efforts should be made to strengthen the Afghan National Army and Police, and Afghans should be given the chance, through the Afghanization process, to have full ownership and control over all issues related to their own country. Moreover, as mentioned in the report, at this time of hardship the people of Afghanistan need to and expect to feel the results of the international community's assistance in their day-to-day lives. It is a bitter fact that the results of aid efforts continue to fall short of popular expectations.

Poppy cultivation, drug production and trafficking in narcotic drugs in Afghanistan continue to

be among the most serious and immediate threats about which we have been constantly and gravely concerned. The narcotic-drugs-related menace has hugely damaged the stability, security and development of Afghanistan and has also had appalling consequences for the entire region and beyond. We appreciate the efforts made by the Afghan Government to fight this threat, but we are of the view that their efforts and those of the international community — particularly those of countries with a military presence in Afghanistan — continue to fall short of what is needed.

Iran has fought a costly and deadly war, with utmost determination, against the drug traffickers originating in Afghanistan, and we will continue to be unwavering in our fight against this menace. Neither the gravity of the task nor the enormous human and material costs inflicted on our nation have been or will be able to break our determination in this important fight. We, however, expect others in the international community to join us more seriously in this endeavour and to pay more attention to this threat. As mentioned in the report at hand, such initiatives as effective eradication efforts, coupled with alternative-livelihood programmes, increased incentives for good governance in the relevant provinces, the destruction of drug laboratories, the countering of corruption and more serious prosecution of drug traffickers are among the measures that can help counter this daunting challenge.

The coming elections for the presidency and the provincial councils, planned for the summer of 2009, are of paramount importance on the Afghan political scene. We hope that the State-building process that started with the Bonn Agreement will continue to move forward with the help and support of the international community.

We in the international community need to coordinate our endeavours, to learn from our past experiences and to redouble our efforts in order to help complete the journey that we started by helping the Afghan people and Government seven years ago. For its part, the Islamic Republic of Iran has spared no efforts to extend its full and sincere cooperation in that regard, and we stand ready to continue on that path. We have been an important part of the international and regional efforts to help Afghans over the past several years. Iran attaches great importance to regional initiatives in that regard, and we have also contributed to the international efforts aimed at helping to alleviate the Afghans' suffering.

We have excellent bilateral relations with Afghanistan. The Presidents of our two countries have visited each other's capitals, and President Karzai just recently visited Tehran to attend the tenth summit of the Economic Cooperation Organization. On the sidelines of the summit, very constructive bilateral and trilateral meetings were arranged at the level of heads of State, including a trilateral meeting among Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan and another meeting that included the presence of Iran, Afghanistan and Tajikistan.

Iran is actively engaged in the reconstruction process in Afghanistan. We have spent hundreds of millions of dollars in building basic infrastructure, roads, railroads, bridges and telecommunication facilities, in capacity-building and on educational services and facilities. Iran has hosted 3 million Afghan refugees over the past three decades and has shouldered a heavy burden in that regard. Fifteen thousand Afghan students are currently studying at Iranian universities, while 250,000 students are attending Iranian elementary and secondary schools as well as high schools. They are enjoying the same facilities and opportunities as those from which our own students and children benefit.

Finally, as members may know, at this very hour we are approaching the Iranian new year, or *Nowruz*, as we call it. This traditional occasion is celebrated not only in Iran, but also in some other parts of the world, particularly Afghanistan. *Nowruz* means a new day, a new beginning. On this occasion, let us think of a new beginning in our serious efforts within the international community to help the Afghan people and Government to continue their journey towards peace, stability and prosperity. They are a great nation. They will make it.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now call on the representative of Pakistan.

Mr. Haroon (Pakistan): All day, we have had the pleasure of hearing many countries state their intent with regard to Afghanistan. At this time in the evening, it must be said that Ambassador Tanin has done a great job, as evidenced in the immense feeling of goodwill that has been expressed throughout this meeting for him and for his country. I offer him my congratulations.

Allow me to thank the Council for the opportunity to participate in this discussion, as this issue is of vital importance for my country and peace

in the region. We feel the pain and untold suffering endured by our brothers in Afghanistan, who have been the victims of history, circumstances and unrelenting conflict for many years.

For three decades, Pakistan has suffered with our Afghan brethren, and the fallout of the instability and conflict has affected us grievously. The refugee influx into Pakistan remains of amazing proportions, and this is only one side of the reality. We have a vital stake in the peace and stability of Afghanistan. The destinies of our two peoples are as closely interlinked in the future as they were in the past. It is with this perspective and deep commitment that we participate in this debate on Afghanistan.

The United Nations has a central role in mobilizing and coordinating international action in support of Afghanistan, and the challenging circumstances of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), led by Special Representative Kai Eide, cannot be underestimated. It is a major contribution and will remain crucial to any settlement that will be defined in conferences around the world for many months to follow. I would like to thank the Secretary-General and Mr. Eide for the most recent report (S/2009/135), which, to my mind, provides an objective overview of the situation in Afghanistan.

The challenges are well-known, from security to political, humanitarian and development issues. The challenges are multifaceted, daunting in scope and closely interlinked. They require a truly comprehensive, substantial and integrated response that is fully owned and led by the Afghans, with the sustained and long-term attention and support of the international community. The ongoing concern remains the increased violence and insecurity, which continue to be rooted in the complex interplay of Taliban, Al-Qaida, warlordism, factional rivalries and the activities of illegally armed and criminal groups and are fuelled by the illicit drug trade. Popular grievances arising from various causes, ranging from civilian casualties to socio-economic hardships and lack of governance and development, are further compounding the situation.

Terrorism remains a major challenge. It has roots in all parts of the world. Together with Afghanistan, Pakistan faces the brunt of the terrorist and extremist threat. In 2008 alone, nearly 2,000 Pakistanis lost their lives in over 600 terrorism-related incidents in Pakistan. Pakistan's economy has suffered directly and indirectly, with losses in the billions. However, this has not diminished our commitment to curb and reverse the menace of terrorism and extremism. To deal with this menace, the Government is pursuing a comprehensive and multi-pronged strategy, partly through a resolution of parliament structured around democracy, dialogue and development. This approach is being pursued with the support, cooperation and ownership of both populations. Our message is unequivocal. The territory of Pakistan will not be allowed to be used for terrorist activities, while our sovereignty and territorial integrity must also be fully respected.

We are doing our utmost to control and interdict illegal movement across the difficult border with Afghanistan. We have established approximately 1,000 checkpoints and deployed more than 120,000 troops on our side of the border. Reciprocal measures on the other side of the border can complement and reinforce this effort. Cooperation under the tripartite military commission has proven useful, and we wish to see this mechanism further strengthened. We are concerned about the financing and arming of militants and recent incursion of militants into our territory. There is an additional security risk posed by the millions of refugees remaining within Pakistan.

I am sure that as the international community reviews its strategy to achieve the common objective of peace in Afghanistan, we will be guided by lessons of history and past mistakes in this dispassionate stock-taking. We should assess why, seven years on, despite having made some notable gains in Afghanistan through heavy investments and sacrifices, the situation does not give rise to much optimism. Are the underlying causes of insecurity being effectively addressed? Are militancy and terrorism being reined in, or are they spreading? How successful are the military strategies? How adequate and effective is the non-military component? Has international assistance brought about a tangible improvement in the lives of the ordinary people? Are we winning the hearts and minds of the people of Afghanistan? If there is to be a rule of thumb to follow in answering these questions, it should be to ask why so many millions remain refugees in appalling conditions in neighbouring countries.

Afghanistan can best cope with its challenges without intervention or interference. However, this should not mean disengagement and abandonment. As

many speakers have mentioned, this has happened in the past. What is required is a fuller understanding of the needs and priorities of the Afghan people and respect for their traditions, values, culture and religion. We agree with the Secretary-General that the strategy must be to prioritize, rationalize and Afghanize. In our view, the following should be the elements of any constructive engagement.

First, we must ensure a comprehensive, coordinated and balanced approach. It is evident that reliance on military means alone cannot deliver peace.

Secondly, for durable stability, people must assume ownership. There should be enhanced focus on indigenous and national capacity-building in all fields, from governance to security, in order to reduce reliance on external support.

Thirdly, a massive investment in reconstruction, development and social welfare is required with the participation of all segments of Afghan society. The benefits of development, rather than insecurity, chaos and deprivation, should become the talk of the town. The drug problem must be dealt with comprehensively in the context of development through the provision of alternative livelihoods.

Fourthly, in the battle for hearts and minds, persuasion must override force and coercion. An inclusive process based on dialogue and broad national reconciliation can catalyse the consolidation of gains from the international efforts in Afghanistan. The forthcoming election offers an excellent opportunity to harness reconciliation and promote inclusion through a democratic process. Pakistan will provide all possible support for the successful conduct of elections.

Fifthly, any strategy should accord priority and allocate resources for the repatriation of the millions of refugees from Pakistan. A pull factor needs to be created inside Afghanistan to encourage the voluntary return of refugees.

Regional cooperation is the key to sustainable peace and development in Afghanistan. A regional approach has to take into account the interests, the capacities and the aspirations of sovereign States and their peoples. It should build solid stakes in lasting peace.

Afghanistan's integration in regional mechanisms is encouraging. It is a member of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, it is a member of the Economic Cooperation Organization, which earlier this month held its tenth summit meeting in Tehran, which also hosted the first Afghanistan-Iran-Pakistan trilateral summit. The second trilateral summit of Afghanistan, Pakistan and Turkey took place earlier in Istanbul in December 2008. Pakistan will host the third Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan in Islamabad in May.

Building on the Kabul and Delhi conferences, the Islamabad meeting will focus on five major themes — mining, health, trade and transit, labour movement and human resources development, and energy and infrastructure, including the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India gas pipeline project. We also look forward to other forthcoming international engagements on Afghanistan, in Moscow on 27 March, The Hague on 31 March and Trieste on 26 and 27 June.

Pakistan attaches high priority to close, friendly and cooperative relations with Afghanistan. The new democratic Government of Pakistan has made a promising beginning with Afghanistan. There have been a number of bilateral interactions at the highest level. We are making steady progress in building a relationship of deeper trust and understanding. The reinvigorated Jirga process provides a useful means for promoting dialogue and development.

During the visit of President Zardari to Afghanistan in January 2009, the two sides signed an historic joint declaration on future directions and bilateral cooperation. The declaration provides a comprehensive framework to take the Pak-Afghan partnership to higher levels in the political, economic, security and social fields.

I may mention that, despite our constraints, Pakistan is also making a significant contribution to the reconstruction and development efforts in Afghanistan. We have pledged $320 million for that purpose, of which $170 million have already been spent on various projects in diverse socio-economic sectors, training, capacity-building and infrastructure.

Let me conclude by saying that Pakistan will be the primary beneficiary of peace and stability in Afghanistan, which is also the collective objective of the international community. We hope that today's debate will further promote this objective, to which Pakistan remains deeply committed.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to Mr. Eide to make some further observations and respond to comments made by delegations.

Mr. Eide: I will try to be brief in responding to some of what has been said. There has been repeated mention of civilian casualties, which is a very complex issue. Nobody is saying that there has been an intention to cause civilian casualties. Of course we all want to avoid them, and I would also say that the Commander of International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) really has made a very strong effort to move in that direction. I admire him.

We also face two other problems in that regard. First of all, I think we will face increasing propaganda from the insurgency over the next year in parallel with an increase in the number of troops. Secondly, we will face the problem that we have constantly seen, namely, the problem of disinformation provided to the military. That can be the result of community disputes or other things, which are sources that contribute to this phenomenon. It is very difficult.

The representative of Pakistan said that we need hearts and minds. It is interesting, for if we say, "we, the international community", we must also, on the other hand, be striving for Afghanization. I believe that only the Afghans can really win the hearts and minds of their population, and therefore this Afghanization is so important.

There were some comments on the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). First of all, the gap between resources and mandates is now closing, so more should be expected of us. There is every reason for that. It may take a few more months before we have the staff in place that we should, but I do expect it.

But I have to ask, "expect what of whom?" I say that because we have only the power of persuasion. That is what the United Nations has. If I try with gentle persuasion, I am told that I am too mild-mannered. If I raise my voice, the media say that it has been a stormy conversation. Ministers come to me and say, "We do not like what you are saying about us", and that is absolutely right. I will continue to say things that they do not like when I see that the required level of coordination is lacking.

It is a difficult situation because it is, in the end, a question of political will. The situation is not one in which donor countries are sitting there waiting for us to come and say, "Would you please do this or that?". They have their national strategies that they are unwilling to adjust. That is the main problem we face.

We are strengthening our presence where we have offices and are establishing new ones. We have opened and will inaugurate the office in Tirin Kot, and we will open others, as well. I mentioned Helmand as one possibility. I would like to say to those who argue that we should move faster and that we should establish offices, particularly in the south, that most troop contributors to ISAF do not want to send armed military to the south. But those around the Council table ask us to send unarmed civilians to the same places. I just leave members with that little remark, because I think it is important to keep in mind.

On the humanitarian side, I think it was the representative of Canada who said "Please strengthen the humanitarian dimension", and I would answer "yes". I do really deplore that that part of the overall United Nations activity has gone so slowly, really slowly. As many participants know, that is the result of a debate that we have had for some time. Fortunately, and hopefully, we have been saved by a mild winter.

Finally, with regard to conferences and regional perspectives, I hope that there is a breakthrough now with regard to the regional dimension and regional cooperation. That will really be important. What I hope is that, starting with the conference in Moscow next week, a momentum could be built where attention is not spread over too many projects, too many initiatives, and that we try to establish a momentum on this and carry that momentum through the various conferences that are planned. If that happens, I believe that there could be success.

I thank the Council for all the support it has given to me and to the Mission. And I thank the President for giving me the chance to speak again.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Mr. Kai Eide for his frank, candid comments to us.

There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 7.10 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.6095

Security Council

Sixty-fourth year

Provisional

6095th meeting

Friday, 20 March 2009, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Shalgham	(Libyan Arab Jamahiriya)
Members:	Austria	Mr. Mayr-Harting
	Burkina Faso	Mr. Kafando
	China	Mr. Liu Zhenmin
	Costa Rica	Mr. Urbina
	Croatia	Mr. Jurica
	France	Mr. Ripert
	Japan	Mr. Takasu
	Mexico	Mr. Heller
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Turkey	Mr. İlkin
	Uganda	Mr. Rugunda
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir John Sawers
	United States of America	Ms. DiCarlo
	Viet Nam	Mr. Le Luong Minh

Agenda

The situation in Somalia

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Somalia (S/2009/132)

Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to Security Council resolution 1846 (2008) (S/2009/146)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A.

09-27495 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Somalia

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Somalia (S/2009/132)

Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to Security Council resolution 1846 (2008) (S/2009/146)

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of the Czech Republic, Malaysia, Norway and Somalia, in which they request to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the consideration of the item, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

On behalf of the Council, I wish to extend a warm welcome to His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Abdullahi Omaar, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Omaar (Somalia) took a seat at the Council table; the representatives of the other aforementioned countries took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend invitations under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to His Excellency Mr. Ahmedou Ould Abdallah, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia; His Excellency Mr. Ramtane Lamamra, Commissioner for Peace and Security of the African Union; and His Excellency Mr. Samir Hosni, Director of African Administration and the Afro-Arab Cooperation Department of the League of Arab States.

It is so decided.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Somalia, document S/2009/132.

Members of the Council also have before them the report of the Secretary-General pursuant to Security Council resolution 1846 (2008), document S/2009/146.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear a briefing by Mr. Ahmedou Ould Abdallah, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia. I now give him the floor.

Mr. Ould Abdallah: The purpose of my presentation is to introduce the next steps in the implementation of the Djibouti agreement, an ongoing process, and to explain how I see Somalia's long march back to normality. First I would like to make a few observations, then to outline the importance of the linkages between governance, security and development, and finally to discuss how to make the best use of the first 100 days of the new Government.

A few observations: for years, the situation in Somalia has been a threat to its people, with continued armed confrontation and subsequent anarchy, and a threat to its neighbours, with border insecurity and trafficking of humans, weapons and drugs. A vulnerable State has made the whole region vulnerable. Finally, it has been a threat to the international community, with increasing irregular migration flows, home-grown hard drugs, terrorism and piracy.

To address the complexities in Somalia, a new paradigm, based on the linkages between governance, security and development, is now needed. While the Somali elite — military, business and religious leaders, but also elders and intellectuals — bears most of the blame for the collapse of their nation, the international community cannot shirk its own responsibilities. Today, all of us, Somalis and the international community, should undertake efforts to win each other's hearts and minds. Somalis have to find a way out of the trap, and we do too.

Obviously, there is no possibility of wide-scale recovery and rehabilitation if the internal situation remains volatile. At the same time, without basic investment in development — providing employment for

youth and women and rehabilitating neighbourhoods — criminality will continue to thrive and security will not improve.

A strategy with achievable goals should help stabilize the country. For the next 100 days, these goals should be limited to employment, renovation of infrastructure and humanitarian assistance. Many young people are always available for violent confrontation. A large number of those extremists, who carry out murder under different banners, are generally far more interested in their share of revenues than in ideology. There are plenty of illegitimate ways to make small and large profits in and from Somalia. How can we convince the profit-seekers and spoilers that peace will be more profitable?

Simultaneous assistance to governance, security and development should be delivered. While large resources are available for Somalia, a major problem is their effective and timely disbursement. That issue should be addressed urgently. However, it should not be up to the international community alone to support Somalia. The country has the longest coastline in Africa — 2,300 kilometres — with rich fish resources and promising hydrocarbon deposits. More important, it has an extraordinarily entrepreneurial business community, and its diaspora sends more than $1 billion home each year. Those advantages should be mobilized for peace, reconstruction and development — not for destruction. Creating insecurity inside the country for 20 years and, now, exposing young members of the diaspora to terrorist activities and suspicion in their new homelands is unpatriotic.

During my first statement before the Council, on 17 December 2007 (see S/PV.5805), I presented three possible courses of action for the United Nations to follow in Somalia. They were: a business-as-usual policy; total withdrawal from the country; and combined, simultaneous, political, security and development undertakings. The Djibouti agreement is the result of the last approach. In that connection, I wish to recognize with thanks the support that I have received from the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the African Union, the League of Arab States, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the European Union, the European Commission, Norway, the United States, Djibouti and Kenya, to mention only a few, as well as the permanent members of the Security Council, who have been very supportive. The members of the International Contact Group on Somalia, which I chair, have demonstrated a strong engagement in favour of stability in Somalia.

Today, we need a 100-day assistance programme. The State legitimacy is established and the legality of the new institutions is recognized regionally, internationally and, indeed, by the vast majority of Somalis. The President, the Speaker, the Prime Minister, the Cabinet and parliament are all back in Mogadishu, a welcome departure from past practices of functioning from outside the capital. Describing Somalia, *The Economist* stated recently that there is a glimmer of hope, and indeed there is a chance for a fresh start.

That new seriousness of purpose invites the international community to back the progress being made through practical actions. Those include, first, immediate support for the new authorities; secondly, immediate diplomatic and financial assistance to the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM); thirdly, transparent and unhindered delivery of humanitarian assistance; fourthly, the matter of individuals on the Security Council sanctions list; fifthly, impunity; and, finally, piracy off the Somali coast.

We should now help Somalis reclaim the future of their country. The new Administration has a convincing legitimacy and is recognized internationally by IGAD, the African Union, the European Union, the League of Arab States, the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the United Nations. There is, therefore, an obligation to respect and cooperate with those new authorities and to do no harm to their institutions and their credibility. They should be consulted on, informed about and associated with all political, economic and humanitarian actions concerning their country. That new approach should put an end to past misunderstandings between some members of the international community and Somalia's central Government. The new Government should also be informed about Somalia's assets held in a number of overseas banks or in accounts managed by international organizations.

Secondly, pending the mobilization of credible funding for AMISOM, the courageous and dedicated African troops and their countries of origin deserve immediate diplomatic recognition and financial support. In that context, I hope that the conference for resource mobilization for AMISOM and the Somali forces, organized in cooperation with the African

Union, the League of Arab States, the European Union and the United Nations within the framework of resolution 1863 (2009), will be successful. The Secretary-General is due to submit a report for a United Nations peacekeeping operation in advance of a Council decision on the issue in June. The integrated planning process to develop the Secretary-General's recommendations is ongoing.

Thirdly, after two decades of armed confrontation, humanitarian assistance is needed more than ever before. While the needs are enormous, Somalia is not to be seen as a purely humanitarian case. A 20-year-long emergency is a contradiction in terms. More has to be done, especially at the political and diplomatic levels, to find a lasting solution. While humanitarian assistance should be provided in close cooperation and consultation with the legitimate Government, it should not and cannot be used as a political tool by any party, be it the Government, the opposition or others.

Fourthly, last year a Somali was taken off the list of the United Nations Al-Qaida and Taliban Sanctions Committee. I believe that others should qualify when they demonstrate a sincere desire to help the return of peace and stability to their country of origin by severing all links with radical groups.

Finally, the Djibouti Agreement makes provision for justice and reconciliation. Impunity perpetuates violence. The country should address crimes against humanity and war crimes committed by Somalis against Somalis. A national truth and reconciliation commission could be established, and the Security Council may also consider the problem through a commission of inquiry.

Regarding piracy, it is above all a profitable business. It is linked to the failure of the State on land and is its extension offshore. It has to be addressed vigorously to help the security of maritime trade routes. By drawing attention to the plight of Somalis, the international naval presence is a show of solidarity with the country and the whole region. Indeed, to fight piracy is also to fight many criminal activities — illegal fishing, waste dumping and trafficking in humans and drugs. At the same time, there is the need to consolidate cooperative work to help trace the pirates' financial resources. At the United Nations Political Office for Somalia, we plan to do that with our colleagues at the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. Finally, while Somalia's sovereignty and national interests are to be respected, acts of piracy by private individuals or groups can never be justified.

In conclusion, given the long-standing scepticism and diehard habits, the struggle for peace will be long. Therefore, the first priority in Somalia is to liberate the hijacked Somali peace agenda, held hostage for so long. I would argue that with the Djibouti Agreement, the country has passed the crossroads. It is on a one-way street going forward. The price of regression to the conflict is too high for Somalia, the region and, indeed, the international community.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Mr. Ahmedou Ould Abdallah, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia, for his briefing and his detailed report.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Abdullahi Omaar, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia.

Mr. Omaar (Somalia): I am pleased to have this opportunity to report recent developments and the significant progress made by the Government of President Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed and Prime Minister Omar Abdirashid Ali Sharmarke. First, however, I wish to thank the Council, the Member States, the Governments, the Secretary-General and the United Nations as a whole for the aid and assistance that they have given to Somalia and the Somali people over the past 18 years. Their support and that of the international community has been crucial for the past efforts for peace in Somalia. We acknowledge and appreciate that, and we now wish to take that forward in partnership with them to re-establish the institutions of the State and to implement the rule of law.

As the Council is aware, the Djibouti peace process delivered a firm platform for a Government of national unity, with the election of our new President on 30 January and his appointment of the Prime Minister on 13 February. One month ago to this day, the Prime Minister announced the new Cabinet, which was sworn into office on 21 February and given an almost unanimous mandate by parliament on the same day. Within a week, the President, the Prime Minister, the Cabinet and parliament all returned to Somalia and assumed the seat of government on a permanent basis with the required quorum, and the first Cabinet meeting took place on 28 February. This assumption of

the seat of government is permanent and irreversible, and the business of government is now fully under way from Mogadishu.

Our first and foremost policy is and will remain the establishment of peace and security in Somalia. That can be achieved only through dialogue, negotiation, the will for compromise and reconciliation. The people of Somalia and the international community have paid a high price to reach this point, and we see it as the moment of truth. We, as the Government, and our partners, the international community, now have the responsibility and the opportunity to realize what has eluded us all for 18 years.

Over the past four weeks of its operation, the Government has taken five essential actions to lay the foundations for its programme of peace and reconciliation.

The first was its immediate and irreversible assumption of the seat of government in the capital, Mogadishu.

The second was the integration of the forces of the Transitional Federal Government and of the Alliance for the Re-liberation of Somalia into the Joint Security Force. That has been successful and effective in the rebuilding of national security forces, which are essential to the establishment of peace and security within the country and are the means for reconciliation within the priority sector of State institutions.

The third has been the developing mobilization of the Somali people in support of the peace process. This mobilization and motivation among the major stakeholders — including merchants and businessmen, clan elders, religious leaders, women and young people — has gathered such momentum that the peace process is now, in reality, a common property that is being both championed and defended by the Somali people and by communities themselves.

Our fourth initiative has been to re-establish the authority of the State and the rule of law in the economy. That has started with the assumption of full authority over Mogadishu port and airport, which are, respectively, the principal seaport and airport in Somalia. Both have been restructured with new administrations and internationally acceptable operational procedures. They are two new sources of internal revenue for the Government, which we aim to develop and strengthen.

Our fifth and most recent initiative has been the re-establishment of our dialogue with the international community through the International Contact Group on Somalia, the Arab League and the African Union and through bilateral discussions in the subregion with Kenya, Burundi, Uganda and Rwanda, undertaken through presidential visits to those countries over the past 10 days.

The need for peace and the will for liberty to achieve it have shown that, in the end, the voice and the will of the people must prevail. That has been no less inevitable in Somalia than it has been in the history of the world. Today in Somalia there are no warlords; there are no clan wars; there are no political factions holding the country hostage. Some, however, still refuse the offer of peace and dialogue, even when we reconfirm that the Sharia is the source of the law, as it is under the Charter of the Transitional Federal Government, and that it will remain so under the proposed constitution now under preparation. Yet we remain ready to negotiate with them, but we will do so only across the table. The gun must be put away.

We have focused and set our targets on the first 100 days. The Somali people have shown their will for peace, and our responsibility as a Government is to provide credibility, coherence and competence in governance. That can be built only in partnership and collaboration with the international community. The society of States that is represented by the United Nations must put the past and its disappointments behind it. We are at a landmark moment, and we cannot afford to fail. We therefore ask you, the member Governments, and other multilateral institutions to support the Government with urgent and immediate action in the following areas.

The first is security stabilization. The Government's security and peacekeeping strategy is based on the twin pillars of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and the Joint Security Force of the Government. With regard to AMISOM, we have requested from the African Union Peace and Security Council and the Governments of Burundi and Uganda that three additional battalions be sent to Somalia on an urgent basis. That needs to be undertaken immediately, with improved equipment, logistics and medical facilities.

With regard to the Joint Security Force, it has not been adequately funded, resourced or equipped thus far, yet it is AMISOM's essential partner for peacekeeping. Without an operational Joint Security Force on the Somali side, AMISOM and the peacekeeping mission will be hampered for lack of a national partner force that will, in time, take on the responsibility for security and stability.

As for the United Nations peacekeeping force, we welcome and support the commitment to establish such a force for Somalia, and we confirm that a significant number of the benchmarks detailed in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2009/132) are already in place.

With respect to the pledging conference set for 22 April, it is most crucial to resource the security sector as a whole, as detailed earlier. Without such resources, visible and effective demonstration of the authority of the State and the rule of law will not be achieved and peace will not be secured.

Finally, with regard to the arms embargo in the security sector, if the Joint Security Force is to be equipped by the international community, to partner with AMISOM and to secure peace, the embargo on the Government must be readdressed.

The second area concerns, in terms of our requirements, cooperation with the Government and capacity-building. The peace process and the achievements so far have been undertaken in partnership with the international community. Our common objectives, and the investments made, have been to assist the Somali people to establish effective institutions of State and the rule of law. The Government of national unity that is now in place has been recognized by the international community. Yet the need to work with the organs of the Government — however fragile — and to respect its dignity and sovereignty must be highlighted. We all need to make adjustments in attitudes and in operational habits and procedures.

Those adjustments must be telescoped into the resourcing of capacity-building for Government institutions. Personnel in the ministries and departments of the Government need training and provision of expertise to re-establish effective operations for the delivery of public services and administrative governance at both the federal and local levels.

With regard to humanitarian aid, as confirmed by the Secretary-General in his report (S/2009/132), more than 3 million people will need humanitarian assistance due to both displacement and drought. Of that total, 580,000 are internally displaced people in the vicinity of Mogadishu. This is a danger to human life that can be averted. It is also a danger to the peace and stability that we all seek. The fruits of peace must show in the lives of the displaced and the victims of drought. They need the Council to act, as they deserve its assistance.

With regard to piracy, as stated by the Secretary-General, defeating piracy in Somalia requires the restoration of the rule of law. As the origin and base of piracy is on land, defeating piracy can only be done in partnership with the Government. In 2008, 111 piracy attacks occurred, and in 2009, seven attacks have occurred already. For our part, we are ready, willing and able to integrate the required actions against piracy into the twin pillars of our security development and stabilization programme, as detailed earlier. We look to the international community for an immediate, agreed plan for implementation.

In Somalia, the momentum for peace has created a new momentum. Somalia is no longer caught in the stalemate of conflict between factions of approximately equal weight. This momentum is led by the Government. We have gained credibility with the Somali people. We are establishing coherence through the State institutions, which we need to be empowered. Most of all, however, we need the resources for the competence needed for governance.

I thank the Security Council for this opportunity to address the Council.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Mr. Mohamed Abdullahi Omaar, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Somalia, for his statement.

In view of the fact that the African Union is an important partner of the United Nations in the peace process in Somalia and that it has a peacekeeping mission there, and since the Commissioner for Peace and Security of the African Union, Mr. Ramtane Lamamra, is with us today, he will be given the floor under rule 39 of the provisional rules of procedure. The information he will be presenting to us is complementary to what the representative of the Secretary-General and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Somalia have provided. I therefore propose that we give the floor to Mr. Lamamra to make a statement

before members of the Council. This is an exceptional proposal and should not be construed as setting a precedent in any way. Are there any objections?

Mr. Ripert (France) (*spoke in French*): Given the very important relations that we, as France and as the Security Council, have with the African Union, it is obvious that it is entirely appropriate to give due consideration to the statements by representatives of the African Union. Given our long-standing friendly relations with Commissioner Lamamra, we of course do not want to keep him from speaking.

However, I must express publicly my reservations concerning the motivation behind this decision. Those reasons were made known to me, and it was with reservations that I accepted the decision, which was taken because of scheduling constraints on the part of the Commissioner, who wished to address the Council before leaving New York. Under these circumstances, France will, of course, help the Commissioner address the Council in the way that he has worked out.

However, if it is because this is a subject that concerns the African Union that the floor will be given to a regional organization before it is given to the Security Council, I will have to express my very serious reservations. That does not seem to be in accordance with, in particular, the discussions that we held in this very Chamber a few days ago on relations between the African Union and the Security Council.

Once again, if it is a matter of scheduling constraints, it is with great pleasure that I would wish to help our friend Mr. Lamamra get out of this difficult situation. Under those circumstances, we have no objections.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): If there are no further comments it is so decided.

I now invite Mr. Ramtane Lamamra, Commissioner for Peace and Security for the African Union, to take a seat at the Council table, and I give him the floor.

Mr. Lamamra (*spoke in Arabic*): Thank you, Mr. President, for your understanding and for your assistance in making it possible for the African Union to address the Council. This is very important for the partnership between the African Union and the United Nations.

(*spoke in English*)

I should like to thank the Council for this opportunity to address it on this very important issue of Somalia.

Somalia has witnessed significant progress since the beginning of the year. Following the resignation of President Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed on 29 December 2008, a number of positive developments took place in the country. First, Somali stakeholders, acting in accordance with the decisions reached within the context of the Djibouti process, expanded the Transitional Federal Parliament to accommodate the Alliance for the Re-liberation of Somalia and other stakeholders, including civil society.

On 30 January 2009, the expanded parliament proceeded, in a free and fair manner, to elect a new President in the person of His Excellency Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed. This election, coupled with the expansion of the parliament, crowned the process initiated by the signing of the Djibouti agreement of 19 August 2008. Later, on 13 February, the newly elected President appointed His Excellency Mr. Omar Abdirashid Ali Sharmarke as the new Prime Minister, and a 36-member national unity cabinet was thereafter constituted. The Government and other transitional institutions have since relocated to Mogadishu.

It is worth noting that the new President, upon assumption of duty, expressed his commitment to work towards effective reconciliation among the Somali people and bring on board those elements that are still outside the peace process. He also stressed the intention of his Government to promote close cooperation with Somalia's neighbours. As the Council is aware, the Djibouti agreement was conducted under the auspices of the United Nations, with the active support of the African Union and other international partners. I should like to underscore the need for sustained United Nations engagement in the implementation of the agreement as a critical part of the effort to promote the success of the peace and reconciliation process.

The African Union (AU) appreciates the Security Council's continued attention in addressing the threats posed by piracy off the coast of Somalia and beyond. The effective actions that are being taken should directly or indirectly assist in promoting much-needed overall security for Somalia and for the whole region.

Indeed, the security situation in Somalia, and in Mogadishu in particular, remains very volatile. In

efforts to address the heightened level of insecurity, notably the attacks directed at the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), President Sheikh Sharif met with representatives of a number of armed opposition groups in a bid to open dialogue with them. The President also established a national security committee to oversee efforts to improve security and broaden reconciliation. Furthermore, a number of religious clerics, traditional leaders, businessmen and the influential Hawiiye Cultural and Unity Council have also intervened and prevailed on some of the groups concerned to halt their attacks on AMISOM. That has resulted in a form of cessation of hostilities, which became effective on 1 March.

I should stress that AMISOM is working closely with the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) to operationalize the Somali Joint Security Force. At the moment, AMISOM is providing food rations to the first batch of recruited TFG/ARS forces. Considering the need to fully equip the Somali Joint Security Force with the requisite weapons and ammunition, the AU has been requested by the Transitional Federal Government to work with the Security Council and take advantage of the exemption to the arms embargo imposed on the country to help the Government acquire arms for its forces.

The humanitarian situation remains particularly difficult. In fact, considerable progress recorded earlier with the return of a number of internally displaced persons and some refugees to Mogadishu, has been reversed, as a number of Mogadishu residents have again been forced out as a result of continued fighting between various armed elements and TFG forces.

For its part, AMISOM continues to provide basic humanitarian relief to local communities. The AMISOM Level I hospital provides medical care to a considerable number of Somalis, while AMISOM water tankers supply portable water to communities around the camps and beyond.

At this juncture, I should like to inform the Council that the AU continues to pursue efforts to enhance AMISOM. The Mission's current strength is 3,450, consisting of two battalions each from Burundi and Uganda, against an authorized strength of 8,000. Steps are under way to deploy, in a matter of days, one additional battalion pledged by Uganda, while consultations continue with Burundi as to the appropriate timing for the deployment of the third battalion pledged by the Burundian Government. The African Union Commission is also engaging other member States to secure additional troops, and I should like to note the contribution of the Government of Algeria in providing airlifts for the rotation of the Burundi contingent units and for the deployment of the third Ugandan battalion at no cost to the AU.

In addition, efforts continue to be made to complete the deployment of the police component of AMISOM as part of the efforts to train, mentor, restructure and reorganize the Somali police. The AU and the United Nations Development Programme are currently developing an integrated support plan for the Somali Police Force, and I would like to seize this opportunity to once again extend the African Union's sincere appreciation to its bilateral and multilateral partners who are providing financial and logistical support to AMISOM.

It is in this light that the AU welcomes Security Council resolution 1863 (2009), adopted on 16 January 2009, in which the Council expressed its intent to consider establishing a United Nations peacekeeping operation in Somalia as a follow-on force to AMISOM, subject to a further decision by 1 June 2009. In this resolution, the Council also approved the proposals made by the Secretary-General on 19 December 2008, for a logistical package to support AMISOM with equipment and services, as well as the establishment of a trust fund to provide financial support to AMISOM to assist in the re-establishment, training, and retention of an all-inclusive Somali security force.

I therefore call upon the Council to build on its position and take the decision needed to deploy a follow-on peacekeeping operation to take over from AMISOM, in view of the fact that, on 11 March 2009, the Peace and Security Council of the African Union renewed the mandate of AMISOM for another three months, in anticipation of the Security Council decision to deploy a follow-on peacekeeping force.

Equally important is the need to urgently implement the decision by the United Nations to provide a logistical support package to AMISOM. In this respect, I look forward to the General Assembly's early budgetary approval of the elements of the support package to be provided through United Nations-assessed contributions. I therefore call on States Members of the United Nations to generously contribute to the envisaged United Nations trust fund

that will provide financial and material support to AMISOM until a United Nations peacekeeping operation is deployed, and to assist in building Somali institutions for security and rule of law.

In conclusion, I should like to express appreciation once again to all partners that have so far extended support to AMISOM both bilaterally and multilaterally. We believe that if we collectively continue to take correct and decisive measures, we will ensure that the current window of opportunity created in Somalia will not have been lost.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Mr. Lamamra, the Commissioner for Peace and Security of the African Union.

Sir John Sawers (United Kingdom): I would like to begin by extending a particularly warm welcome to the Foreign Minister of Somalia on his first appearance at this Council. He and his Government are very welcome at our deliberations, and we congratulate him on his appointment. We also thank him for his well-considered, thorough and, if I may say so, well-judged statement. Of course, we also welcome our old friend, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and Mr. Lamamra, whom we have just heard speaking.

All speakers have pointed to the encouraging developments of the last several months. They did not emphasize one of them, which was the smooth withdrawal of Ethiopian forces at the beginning of this year, but we can all recognize that that was an important step, as were, of course, the election of President Sharif, the formation of a new transitional Government and, in particular, the decision, highlighted by the Foreign Minister, to base the new Government in Mogadishu. President Sharif has also shown much personal courage in reaching out to the different factions in Somalia in an effort to establish political reconciliation, and in that he has our full support.

While welcoming the progress that has been made, we should not underestimate the scale or complexity of the challenges that Somalia continues to face. There are four particular areas where progress is urgently needed and which we believe should be the focus of the Council's attention. The first is tackling the humanitarian crisis. More than 3 million people need assistance in Somalia. The international community must continue to provide aid and support the Government in delivering basic security, employment and services, and the new Government needs to develop its own revenue streams and set its budget priorities.

Secondly, there is the political track. We need Somali solutions to Somali problems, and the Djibouti process has given us a very good start on that. The international community must continue to support the new Government and also give that Government the space to act and to pursue reconciliation politically. Over time, the new Government will need to establish wider justice and reconciliation processes, helping to create an environment in which different groups can live together.

I encourage the United Nations Political Office and other United Nations staff to continue to work with President Sharif's Government and to make regular visits to Mogadishu.

Thirdly, we need to create a secure environment in which the new Government can work. Some good work has been done, including by the United Nations Development Programme, in training the Somali police. There is still much to be done in strengthening the joint security forces. We warmly welcome their creation; this is the only long-term solution. We should all consider how we can best help.

The African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) continues to play a critical role, by providing security in the centre of Mogadishu, key installations there, providing a base for President Sharif's Government to operate in the capital. I pay tribute to our brothers from Uganda and Burundi for their continuing commitment to this difficult operation.

I would like to announce today that the United Kingdom will be giving this month an additional £10 million to the United Nations AMISOM trust fund. That is in addition to the £5 million that we have already given directly to the African Union for AMISOM. We encourage others also to contribute.

The Council will need to return in May to the issue of a possible United Nations peacekeeping operation. As the Secretary-General says in his current report, there remains uncertainty about whether a classic United Nations peacekeeping operation is the right tool to support the political process in Somalia (S/2009/132). We look forward to his next report in a month or so.

The fourth area we need to pay attention to is piracy. We need to continue to work to ensure that security exists on Somalia's seas as well as on its land. We have to tackle both piracy at sea and its root causes on the land. We welcome the work of the Contact Group and agree with the recommendations in the Secretary-General's report, particularly on developing regional capability. On the operational front, the United Kingdom is providing the commander and the headquarters of the European Union naval mission off of the coast of Somalia. We look forward to continued progress in tackling this problem.

Recent developments in Somalia give us some grounds for cautious optimism. This is a country that has endured almost 20 years of conflict and humanitarian tragedy. The challenges that President Sharif and his Government will face in the coming months remain immense and we must urgently provide practical support to the new Government, as well as to AMISOM, if we are to help bring about the stability and security that the people of Somalia deserve.

Mr. Heller (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): We are grateful for the briefing by Mr. Ould Abdallah, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia and the statements of Mr. Omaar, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Somalia, and Ambassador Lamamra, Commissioner for Peace and Security of the African Union, who join the Council today.

My delegation shares the view of the Special Representative on what has been called the long march of Somalia towards stability, taking into account both the progress made in just a few weeks and the many remaining challenges. In the light of the success of the presidential elections held on 30 January in Djibouti, it is important for the international community to redouble its efforts to complete the establishment of the Somali State and its institutions, in close coordination with the new Government of Somalia, the United Nations, the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and regional organizations.

In Mexico's view, concrete action in the following areas is of priority. First, it is fundamentally important that the Djibouti agreement, signed in 2008 between the Transitional Federal Government and the Alliance for the Re-liberation of Somalia, continue to be the operative mechanism to promote the process of national peace and reconciliation. The new President has demonstrated his commitment to international efforts to establish peace. An example is the agreement reached with some insurgent groups to declare a truce and proclaim Islamic law, sharia. However, it is worrying that the most extremist groups remain on the sidelines of dialogue, which threatens the fragile progress achieved. The President must therefore continue his efforts to bring about the full implementation of the agreement in order to promote inclusive political dialogue to stabilize the country.

Secondly, it is essential that the new Government focus its efforts on a complete reform of the security sector — based upon the recommendations of the technical assessment mission which visited Addis Ababa and Nairobi last January — as a useful starting point to achieve progress in strengthening the Somali police force with the support of the Joint Security Committee and the Joint Security Force.

Concrete progress must also be promoted with regard to the justice system and to programmes to combat national and regional arms trafficking. That must be linked to actions to bring about the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants as well as demining activities with United Nations support. The responsibility of the African Union here is essential, and close cooperation and coordination with regional bodies will facilitate the creation of strategies to consolidate the rule of law and bring about full compliance with international law as a basis for socio-economic development.

Thirdly, the Security Council must bring about the active participation of regional bodies and mechanisms during discussions on the issue. Exchange of information and points of view with groups such as the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and the International Contact Group on Somalia can provide valuable contributions to such discussions.

Fourthly, with regard to human rights, the enlarged police force must ensure full observance of human rights and adopt measures to protect the civilian population and ensure those responsible for violations be held accountable for the deaths of civilians, whether resulting from crossfire incidents, targeted assassinations or the murder of judges, as such acts foster impunity and undermine the judicial system.

Mexico also condemns the attacks against humanitarian workers, which have caused a reduction in humanitarian aid and significantly affected vulnerable groups, in particular women and children.

Measures must also be taken to address the alarming recruitment and use of children in armed conflict. Here, we acknowledge the significant role played by the Human Rights Unit of the United Nations Political Office for Somalia. We reiterate how important it is for that Office to continue its work in coordination with the new Government and AMISOM.

With regard to international humanitarian law, Mexico calls upon the parties to the conflict to observe its provisions and principles, to cease attacks immediately and to avoid situations where civilians may be affected.

It is also essential that the new Somali Government fulfil the measures of the sanctions Committee, as a complementary measure to the endeavours to bring about peace and security in the region.

With regard to the report of the Secretary-General on piracy in Somalia (S/2009/146), we acknowledge that piracy is one of the consequences of the serious instability affecting the country. That is why we agree with the Secretary-General on the importance of following an integrated approach to achieve stability in the region.

Mexico condemns acts of piracy, armed robbery and violent acts against the safety of navigation in the Gulf of Aden and believes that their perpetrators must be brought to justice under the applicable legal system.

Likewise, Mexico supports the validity, relevance and applicability of existing international law to address the threat represented by acts of piracy off the coast of Somalia. In that regard, we recognize the importance of Security Council resolutions 1816 (2008) and 1846 (2008), which authorize, subject to certain conditions, entry into Somalia's territorial waters, in accordance with the United Nations Charter.

I wish to emphasize that in Mexico's view — as the texts of the aforementioned resolutions explicitly indicate — the powers granted to the Security Council under Chapter VII of the Charter are the legal basis that permits States to enter Somalia's territorial waters for the purpose of suppressing acts of piracy and armed robbery at sea and to employ, in Somalia's territorial waters, in a manner consistent with actions permitted on the high seas with respect to piracy under relevant international law all necessary measures to counter acts of piracy and armed robbery.

In that sense, in both resolutions, the Security Council, having determined the situation to be one that threatens international peace and security, decided on the measures necessary to maintain or re-establish that peace and security. It is important also to recall that both resolutions explicitly establish that the authorizations granted are not considered precedents in customary international law. In our view, that is recognition of the exceptional nature of the authorized actions and of the Security Council acting pursuant to Chapter VII of the Charter. With that understanding, Mexico wishes to review its support for the initiatives undertaken by the International Maritime Organization and the Security Council to counter this threat in a coordinated and consistent way.

Lastly, my delegation supports the work of the Contact Group on Piracy Off the Coast of Somalia, set up pursuant to resolution 1851 (2008), and recognizes the importance of the multinational operations taking place off the coast of Somalia to combat piracy.

Mr. Kafando (Burkina Faso) (*spoke in French*): First of all, I would like to thank Mr. Ahmedou Ould Abadallah for his briefing on the situation in Somalia and express our appreciation for the presence of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Somalia. We also thank Commissioner Lamamra for his very informative statement.

Reading the Secretary-General's report (S/2009/132), we can only conclude that the general situation in Somalia is still a source of great concern, notwithstanding the significant progress that has been recorded, in particular since the signing of the Djibouti agreement. That is certainly true, especially with regard to the current security situation.

However, in our opinion, we find ourselves today in the presence of a new and determined Somalia, with a Government based in Mogadishu and a clear overall vision of how to emerge from the situation. That is why, following the example of the meeting of heads of State of the African Union, we should welcome the new Government and, above all, help provide it with all necessary assistance for it to meet its obligations. More precisely, we would like to urge the international community to continue to assist the parties, in particular the new authorities, to help them bolster their efforts to strengthen political cooperation and to integrate, restructure and train the Somali Police Force.

As we are aware of the difficulties linked to the scope of the task, it is only right that we congratulate the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, the country team, all United Nations agencies and Somalia's bilateral partners for their tireless efforts. We support the conclusions of the International Contact Group on Somalia, which met on 16 December 2008, on the need to immediately strengthen the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM).

Despite positive political progress, the security situation has greatly deteriorated, particularly since the withdrawal of the Ethiopian troops. Both in Mogadishu and in other areas, a stronger presence of militias and other insurgent forces has spread violence throughout the country. There are more and more victims, both within the civilian population and among humanitarian and peacekeeping personnel.

Given that fragile security situation, we think that the security aspect of the Djibouti agreement must be rapidly implemented, in particular with regard to the Joint Security Committee, the Joint Security Force and the Somali Police Force. We believe that sustained support to those three security bodies is the first step that the international community must take to help Somalia today. That will enable the authorities to strengthen their own security, to protect the civilians and to secure the supply of humanitarian assistance.

Here, we would like to congratulate Burundi and Uganda for their commitment and their spirit of sacrifice, which was further affirmed by their respective decisions to deploy an additional battalion each to strengthen AMISOM. Saying that, we strongly condemn the attacks against AMISOM, and we reiterate our commitment to the security and integrity of the African force. The recent murderous attacks of which AMISOM soldiers were victims raise the urgent issue of strengthening that Mission.

My delegation believes that at this stage of the developing situation, we should attach particular importance to the strengthening of AMISOM, with a view to a future deployment of a United Nations peacekeeping operation, as recommended by resolution 1863 (2009). AMISOM represents the achievement upon which the United Nations can build a future international presence in Somalia and must be strengthened as rapidly as possible and brought up to United Nations standards.

We therefore congratulate the Department of Peacekeeping Operations for its diligence and its comprehensive evaluation of the needs of AMISOM. The proposals and recommendations made there are, in our opinion, realistic, given that the analysis by the technical assessment mission concluded that the existing logistical support to AMISOM consists of basic equipment and services that do not meet United Nations standards.

The international community must therefore firmly support the Secretary-General's plans and make every effort for their success. In that regard, we await with interest the results of the donor conference to be held on 22 April in Brussels.

The already deplorable humanitarian situation runs the risk of worsening, given the drought in certain regions. Moreover, the slowing down of humanitarian operations owing to the insecurity is an issue that must be dealt with quickly, at a time when displaced persons are gradually returning to Mogadishu, a city that lacks basic infrastructure, drinking water and health services. Moreover, the civilian population remains exposed to the threat of unexploded ordnance and mines. Burkina Faso condemns violence against humanitarian personnel. We congratulate the humanitarian agencies on their efforts and encourage them to pursue their activities, despite those difficult conditions.

Burkina Faso firmly believes in the possibility of a comprehensive and lasting solution to the Somali crisis. The country's political actors have made significant progress and displayed a resolve that the Secretary-General himself describes as encouraging. That is why we urge the international community to overcome its hesitations and to increase its assistance with a view to the development and strengthening of Somalia's new institutions.

Ms. DiCarlo (United States of America): I, too, would like to welcome Foreign Minister Omaar to the Council and to thank him for his comments. My Government congratulates him and other members of the unity Government and assures them of our cooperation and support. I would also like to welcome Special Representative Ould Abdallah and to thank him for his briefing today.

Recent events present an opportunity to make real progress in Somalia. We welcome the election of President Sharif and the unity Government's move to

Mogadishu. We must support the Somali people so that they can take advantage of this opening.

We remain encouraged by the political progress made under the Djibouti agreement. My Government strongly supports President Sharif's efforts to encourage parties that are still outside the Djibouti process to join him in order to rebuild their troubled country.

In that spirit, we urge all groups that have yet to lay down their arms and join the peace and reconciliation process to do so. Unfortunately, the terrorist organization Al-Shabaab has failed to join that process, vowing instead not only to target the new Government but also to continue its campaign against the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and humanitarian non-governmental organizations.

At the same time, Eritrea continues to provide financial, logistical and political backing to Al-Shabaab and other extremists and has issued a formal statement rejecting the new Somali Government. We condemn those actions by Al-Shabaab and Eritrea. They serve only to prolong the conflict in Somalia and cannot be tolerated.

We highly commend the brave troops from Burundi and Uganda serving in AMISOM, who continue to operate under difficult conditions. They are doing crucial work in securing key infrastructure and allowing for the delivery of humanitarian aid, and they deserve our support. The United States, for its part, has provided logistical assistance to AMISOM totalling more than $100 million since 2007. We urge African Union member States that have pledged to provide troops to AMISOM to arrange to deploy them soon, and we strongly urge United Nations Member States to support AMISOM. Of course, Somalia must begin to provide for its own security, and we should consider ways to assist in the development of a Somali security sector.

The Council has made significant efforts to address the problem of piracy off the Somali coast. The United States is encouraged by the international community's response. On any given day, ships from 15 to 20 different countries are now patrolling those waters. My Government also believes that the Contact Group on Piracy Off the Coast of Somalia is proving to be an effective coordinating mechanism, and we look forward to the third meeting of that Group. We also commend the Government of Kenya for offering to prosecute suspected pirates captured by the international community. We urge all States — especially those directly harmed by piracy — to help the Kenyan Government manage the logistical and financial challenges of prosecuting suspected pirates. That is a burden that should not fall upon the shoulders of Kenya and its neighbours alone.

Finally, let me thank the staff of the United Nations agencies and aid groups that have provided needed assistance to the Somali people under very difficult and dangerous circumstances. We strongly condemn those who impede the delivery of needed assistance through attacks against aid workers and AMISOM troops.

Progress in Somalia will not come easily. The Secretary-General's upcoming donors conference presents us with an opportunity to support the Somalis during this critical period. Let us take advantage of it.

Mr. Ripert (France) (*spoke in French*): I, too, wish to thank previous speakers, in particular Mr. Ahmedou Ould Abdallah, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia; Mr. Mohamed Abdullahi Omaar, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Somalia; and Mr. Ramtane Lamamra, Commissioner for Peace and Security of the African Union.

The Czech Presidency of the European Union will be taking the floor shortly, and I obviously support the statement that will be made.

The report of the Secretary-General (S/2009/132) and the presentations that we have just heard confirm that a positive dynamic has begun in Somalia. The expansion of parliament, the election of a President, the formation of a unity Government and the inclusive dialogue begun with all parties by the new Somali President to urge them to join the Djibouti process are all positive political signals. Moreover, the Secretary-General's report indicates the initial return of internally displaced persons to Mogadishu. That is also a sign of confidence.

In addition, France highlights the fact that the withdrawal of Ethiopian troops has not created a security vacuum. In the end, that has not benefited the most radical groups, instead making it possible to marginalize them by removing their main argument for continuing the violence. Somalis should be congratulated on this progress towards peace and reconciliation. Congratulations go also to the Special

Representative of the Secretary-General and, of course, to his team on their tireless efforts vis-à-vis the parties.

. However, every day that passes reminds us of the extreme fragility of the situation. The humanitarian situation remains very bad, with more than 3 million people dependent on international aid and hundreds of thousands still on the road to Afgooye. The conditions are all the harsher because humanitarian workers are being targeted, in constant violation of international humanitarian law: in 2008, 34 were killed and 26 abducted; since the beginning of this year, three World Food Programme workers have been killed and four briefly kidnapped. In Mogadishu itself, attacks continue against the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). We have, in this Chamber, condemned the deadly attack of 25 February against AMISOM soldiers. Two days ago, another soldier was killed and three others were wounded.

In the light of that situation, the international community obviously has an essential role to play. First, we must provide full political support to the Somali authorities and encourage them to continue their efforts to achieve reconciliation and dialogue among all parties. We must also support the establishment of a robust, well-equipped and trained Joint Security Force and a professional police force. It is important to reduce insecurity by directly controlling the essential areas of the city of Mogadishu so that the Government can establish its authority in Somalia and make a real change in people's lives.

In parallel, we must strengthen the AMISOM forces, who have fulfilled their mission with great courage. Here, on behalf of France, I should like to pay tribute to Burundi and Uganda for their actions and to the African Union for its efforts to enable AMISOM to reach full deployment.

Strengthening AMISOM requires additional financial resources. Many donors already provide significant aid to Somalia and AMISOM — in particular the European Union, the African Union's leading financial partner, including through the African Peace Facility. France has assisted in the training of four AMISOM contingents, and French officers are currently in Uganda to help the parties prepare a Ugandan contingent.

The Security Council, through resolution 1863 (2009), has taken the decisions necessary to ensure that the United Nations can provide a logistical support package to AMISOM and establish a special trust fund, making it possible to find additional resources to support AMISOM and strengthen the Somali security forces. The Secretary-General has taken an emergency measure by making available $50 million. The first ships are beginning to arrive in Mogadishu. By the end of this month, the General Assembly will debate an initial instalment of funding. We hope that the donors conference will be held soon.

The implementation of resolution 1863 (2009) is a difficult task. Indeed, we must act swiftly and pragmatically, first focusing on the logistical package, a concrete measure that can be implemented quickly so that AMISOM can make an immediate difference.

I should like to stress that the duty of the international community is not merely to deal with security issues. In addition to the mechanism of individual sanctions available to the Council, the fight against impunity is an essential aspect that we must not neglect, because the culture of impunity prevailing in Somalia is a major obstacle on the path of peace. France fully supports the approach of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in that regard.

Like some previous speakers, I should also like to recall that, on more than one occasion last year, the Security Council discussed the possible establishment of a peacekeeping operation. We will resume that discussion on the basis of the report of the Secretary-General that is expected in mid-April. But we must not lose sight of the fact that, in the interests of the Somali people, what is important is a full and swift implementation of resolution 1863 (2009).

This means that combating piracy is all the more necessary. Since the first operation to protect World Food Programme (WFP) vessels undertaken by France in November 2007, the fight against piracy has greatly expanded. The European Union, together with many other international partners, is playing a major role, through its Operation Atalanta, to secure the supplies on which so many Somalians depend. Operation Atalanta has allowed the secure transportation of more than 100,000 tons of food aid. The European Union High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy has expressed his support for the protection of United Nations convoys.

It is on the ground in Somalia that the root causes of piracy must be resolved, but the fight against piracy is also a matter of urgency. We welcome the fact that

so many nations and organizations are participating in this fight. Food deliveries by WFP quadrupled between 2007 and 2008.

I would like once again to express our full support to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. I would like to reiterate to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Somalia that he can fully count on France to help his Government to respond to, as he so eloquently stated, the need for peace and the will for liberty that motivates his people.

Mr. Takasu (Japan): I would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for his statement. We acknowledge, as stated in his briefing that significant progress has been made recently in the political process in Somalia. We have also witnessed very proactive efforts by the new President, Prime Minister and cabinet members in urging opposition groups to participate in the peace process.

However, the prospects for realizing a more inclusive peace process remain dim. Hostilities against the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) continued to be carried out by rebel groups. The international community must continue to support the efforts of the new Government to promote an inclusive political process.

A major area of concern is the unstable security situation. The attack on AMISOM in February resulted in the loss of 11 Burundian soldiers, and recently four United Nations aid workers were abducted and subsequently released. In these difficult circumstances, AMISOM continues to secure strategic installations in cooperation with the joint security forces. Japan appreciates and commends the troop-contributing countries Burundi and Uganda for their important role in the Mission.

The troop-contributing countries need every support in terms of logistics, training and equipment. It is important that the United Nations logistical package for AMISOM, proposed in the letter by the Secretary-General dated 19 December 2008 (S/2008/804), be speedily approved in accordance with the relevant United Nations rules and procedures, with adequate oversight and transparency.

An international donors conference will be organized to seek support for AMISOM and for the capacity-building of Somali institutions, in accordance with resolution 1863 (2009). Building the capacity of Somali security institutions, including the joint security forces, is essential for stabilizing the security situation. Given the difficult situation on the ground, it is important for the international community to formulate the best possible way to assist Somali people in pursuing both a quick response and accountability at the same time. Japan, for its part, has provided assistance for humanitarian needs and security sector enhancement in an amount totalling $64.5 million over the past two years.

Acts of piracy off the coast of Somalia pose a threat to the international community, seriously affecting safe passage and therefore requiring urgent action. In terms of the efforts of the international community, just a week ago, on 13 March 2009, the Japanese Government approved the deployment of Japan Self-Defence Forces to take measures against acts of piracy at sea off the coast of Somalia and in the Gulf of Aden, in accordance with provisions of the existing law allowing maritime security operations on an emergency basis. Two destroyer ships have departed from Japan on this mission. The Japanese Government has also submitted a new draft law on the penalization of acts of piracy and measures against acts of piracy for approval by our Diet.

As was discussed in the series of meetings of the Contact Group on Piracy Off the Coast of Somalia, it is important to strengthen partnerships, including through United Nations efforts for information sharing, in order to improve coordination between the various activities of Member States and the countries in the region. Japan will continue its active participation in the coordinated measures to address Somali piracy issues, drawing on its experience in Asia, such as the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against ships in Asia.

Finally, we agree with the Secretary-General that it is important to take a multi-faceted approach to resolving the unstable situation in Somalia. The members of the transitional parliament have been moving back to the capital. The integrated approach requires a truly inclusive political process that incorporates various opposition groups, clan leaders, civil society and other relevant stakeholders for nation-building.

It will also be essential to assist institution-building in Somalia, such as efforts to strengthen governing capacity and infrastructure, for the sake of

long-term stability. The international community must strengthen cooperation and interaction with Somalia, and we should mobilize the necessary support and resources.

As for the future transition of AMISOM to a United Nations peacekeeping operation, Japan looks forward to examining the report of the Secretary-General that is due by 15 April in order to determine the most appropriate course of action. We hope to receive a detailed and realistic assessment from the Secretary-General on the security and political situation on the ground.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are grateful to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia, Mr. Ould Abdallah, for his presentation and for the reports of the Secretary-General on the situation in Somalia (S/2009/132) and on ensuring long-term security of navigation off the Somali coast (S/2009/146), prepared pursuant to resolution 1846 (2008), on piracy.

We too are grateful for the detailed briefing and the assessments provided.

We listened carefully to the statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Somalia, Mr. Mohamed Abdullahi Omaar. We welcome the recent positive political developments in Somalia, the peaceful transition of power, the election by the expanded Transitional Federal Parliament or the new President of the Republic, Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed, the appointment of the Prime Minister and the formation of the Government. We expect that the new President will be able to unite the forces from all sides in the Somali conflict in order to provide for an operational Government, move ahead with the consolidation of society and establish the rule of law and a lasting peace in the country.

We take note of and support the mediation efforts in this direction, by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia, Mr. Ould Abdallah. We take note of the findings of the technical assessment mission, set out in the report of the Secretary-General, which include, in particular, the proposal made with respect to the logistical support package for the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). We assume that these proposals worked out detail by the relevant General Assembly bodies, taking into account established budget procedures.

With respect to the prospects of deploying a United Nations peacekeeping operation in Somalia, the future decision of the Council in this area will depend to a large extent on the commitment to peace of the Somalis themselves, on a substantial improvement in the security situation and on serious progress towards a political settlement. These basic preconditions are not yet in place. However, we believe that a possible United Nations operation in Somalia should be further planned, and that the modalities of the transformation of AMISOM — whose work we support — into such an operation should be further defined.

We will be expecting the corresponding conclusions and proposals of the Secretary-General in his April report pursuant to resolution 1863 (2009). That resolution provides for an increase in international assistance to the Somali peace process. Success in this area will contribute to the solution of the whole complex of problems, including that of eradicating piracy off the Somali coast. The report of the Secretary-General on this issue (S/2009/146) indeed reflects the efforts by the international community to more effectively combat piracy and armed robbery at sea in this region. We urge the Secretary-General to continue his active work in this area.

International commitments made in the Security Council have already brought results. However, we are still far from being able to see the reversal of the negative trends with respect to the acts of piracy off the shores of Somalia. We believe that a multidimensional approach to the problem of piracy is required. We see the road to a long-term solution in moving the Djibouti peace process forward to ensure order and security in the country and to overcome the socio-economic factors that encourage the growth of piracy. Moreover, we must do everything possible to strengthen the capacities of the Somali Government itself, for in the last analysis, the success of the fight against piracy depends on the success of the Government.

A special role in establishing conditions for effectively combating piracy should be played by the Governments of the region. We therefore believe that we should support such regional initiatives as the adoption in Djibouti in January of a code of conduct to combat piracy along the Horn of Africa. Solving the problem includes the development of a single legal basis for the arrest and prosecution of pirates, thus

facilitating the fight against piracy along the Somali coast.

The Russian Federation is continuing to make effective contributions to international anti-piracy actions and is actively participating in the implementation of appropriate initiatives, in particular in the framework of the Contact Group on Piracy Off the Coast of Somalia. Ships of the Russian naval fleet are carrying out the task of ensuring the safety of navigation and of other types of maritime economic activities off the coast of Somalia. That task is carried out in coordination with the naval fleets of China, France, India and the United States, and with the naval fleet of the European Union and NATO's Combined Task Force-151. Since October 2008, more than 80 Russian and other vessels have been escorted, and four attempts by pirates to capture merchant ships have been averted. We are committed to working closely with interested parties on all aspects of the problem.

In concluding, I wish the people and the Government of Somalia progress in exiting this crisis, which has lasted too long. Russia will assist them in finding solutions.

Mr. Rugunda (Uganda): I join other colleagues in thanking the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia, Mr. Ould Abdallah, for his briefing. I also wish to welcome the Foreign Minister of Somalia and the Commissioner for Peace and Security of the African Union, Mr. Lamamra, and thank them for their briefings.

We are happy that the Minister for Foreign Affairs could make it to New York to share with us the latest developments in Somalia. The challenges facing Somalia within the country are many and indeed pressing. The conflict in Somalia has also had negative consequences for the region in terms of refugees, piracy and proliferation of small arms, as well as fostering a breeding ground for terror activities.

We are therefore encouraged that the recent positive political developments, particularly in regard to the implementation of the Djibouti peace agreement, point to a new and positive direction in Somalia. These developments have in the last couple of months included the expansion of the parliament, the election of President Ahmed, the appointment of Prime Minister Sharmarke and the formation of a Government of national unity. All of these developments provide a unique opportunity for peace and stability in Somalia.

Uganda therefore welcomes the efforts of President Ahmed and his Government in reaching out to various groups and for being accommodative of different opinions. The decision to move the seat of government to Mogadishu and the Government's announcement of four priority areas where minimum recovery could be expected within the first hundred days — security and reconciliation, humanitarian access, institutional capacity-building, and management of transitional arrangements — are bold and commendable. In view of that, we call upon all parties to respond positively to the President's initiatives and join the political process so that the urgent task of rebuilding the country can begin in earnest.

We commend the international community for the support that it has extended to the Somali people in facilitating negotiations in their quest for peace. In this regard, I want once again to salute the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Ould Abdallah, for his pivotal role in the Djibouti peace process.

While we recognize these positive developments and thank all who have facilitated the process, we remain fully aware that the situation in Somalia is still fragile and that there are some groups that are still bent on taking the path of violence and who continue to mount attacks in different parts of the country. The latest attack on the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), which killed a Ugandan army officer, is one such desperate and condemnable act. Besides destabilizing the country and delaying the return to normalcy, these attacks also impede the delivery of much-needed humanitarian assistance to ordinary citizens, particularly the most vulnerable. We therefore condemn the targeting of humanitarian personnel and all acts of impunity, violations of human rights and international humanitarian law.

Like many of those who have spoken before us, we are deeply disturbed by piracy off the coast of Somalia. Not only does it impede the delivery of humanitarian assistance to the needy, it also interferes with international trade and raises shipping costs. Therefore it has a negative impact on economic development in the region and worsens the already negative impact of the current global economic crisis.

The seizure yesterday of a Greek vessel in the Gulf of Aden is yet another reminder of the menace of

piracy despite the measures that have been put in place to address the problem. While measures such as naval patrols have checked the incidents of attacks, the latest seizure demonstrates once again that the ultimate solution to the problem of piracy lies in supporting and enabling Somalia to regain its standing as a sovereign entity with working institutions having the capacity to enforce law and order, rein in pirates on its territory and provide basic services to the Somali people.

In all these areas, be it in peace and political processes under way in Somalia or in helping with the delivery of humanitarian assistance, the rebuilding of State institutions and the fight against piracy, AMISOM has been playing a vital role. We believe it could do even more in these areas to assist the people of Somalia if it is strengthened. We are therefore encouraged that a support package is being put in place that will enable AMISOM not only to sustain its operations but also to attain its full authorized strength so that it can better fulfil its mandate.

Finally, the Somali people have suffered long enough. The initiatives aimed at reconciliation and political accommodation pursued by President Ahmed deserve our full support. However, we — as the international community or as neighbours — can only do so much. Ultimately, the responsibility for bringing lasting peace and stability to Somalia rests squarely with the Somali people themselves. We therefore urge all Somalis, of all shades of opinion and belief, to give peace a chance, to forget the past and to look to the future in rebuilding the country.

Uganda has circulated a draft statement to the press that we hope can meet with the consensus of the Council, but we welcome any input by Council members.

Mr. Urbina (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): Let me begin by expressing my thanks to Mr. Ahmedou Ould Abdallah, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia, for his briefing this morning. I wish also to welcome the presence of Mr. Mohamed Abdullahi Omaar, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Somalia, and to thank Mr. Ramtane Lamamra, Commissioner for Peace and Security of the African Union, for his statement.

In Somalia we are witnessing one of the world's most tragic humanitarian crises and one of the most challenging political situations for the international community. There have been no easy solutions for the crisis in Somalia. The situation requires a holistic approach which, it is now clear, must take account of the complexity of the problem and make use of a variety of tools to overcome this unique crisis.

This also requires the cooperation of all segments of Somalia society who are committed to the Djibouti process and the firm support of the international community. Together, we must seek to broaden the base of the Djibouti agreement, involving the largest possible number of stakeholders who are now outside the process, as President Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed has been doing.

Those are difficult factors in settling the Somali crisis; they will certainly demand the commitment of national and international actors for many years to come. The task of establishing broad-based legitimate political institutions is urgent; it is a sine qua non for moving forward on the path to overcoming the crisis in Somalia, which will be possible only on the basis of a long-term strategy embracing the humanitarian, political, security and development facets of the Somali crisis.

Here, we welcome as a step in the right direction the election of Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed as President of Somalia and the subsequent appointment of Mr. Omar Abdirashid Ali Sharmarke as Prime Minister. We are confident that they will both be able to enjoy sufficient legitimacy to foster an inclusive political process, which can contribute to reconciliation and lay the foundations for national reconstruction.

The precarious security situation in Somalia is a matter of concern for my delegation, in particular when we consider the increase in attacks on personnel of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). We hope that progress in implementing resolution 1863 (2009) and carrying out measures to strengthen AMISOM will lessen the Mission's vulnerability and enhance its effectiveness in the field. In that connection, we support the Secretary-General's appeal to the international community, with a donors conference in view, to support current activities aimed at the establishment of a joint security force in Somalia.

My delegation condemns attacks against the civilian population and regrets the increased number of civilian deaths, many of whom have died when caught in the crossfire in attacks directed against AMISOM. It is urgent that all endeavours to ensure free access of

humanitarian assistance and to improve the safety and security of humanitarian personnel — who are helping more than 3 million people in Somalia, who are dependent on this aid — continue. We remind all parties to the conflict that they are obliged to abide by the provisions of international law, in particular international humanitarian law. Fighting impunity is a high priority because of continued human rights violations, the blocking of humanitarian assistance, attacks on international staff distributing aid and ongoing attacks against the civilian population. It must be part of the strategy to put an end to the crisis in Somalia.

My delegation recognizes the will of African countries to strengthen AMISOM. We support the Mission's work; it is a vital element in bringing stability to Somalia and creating a space in which dialogue and reconciliation efforts can continue.

Finally, I express our satisfaction at the progress in cooperative efforts to combat piracy off the Somali coast, especially because of the importance of those efforts in ensuring the delivery of humanitarian assistance. We hope that the international community's commitment to address the crisis brought about by the proliferation of piracy will heighten the attention the international community must devote to addressing the root causes of the crisis in Somalia and to fostering efforts to achieve peace.

Mr. İlkin (Turkey): I would like to join previous speakers in thanking the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for his comprehensive briefing. I welcome among us the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Somalia and thank him for sharing his views with us. My thanks go also to the Commissioner for Peace and Security of the African Union.

We welcome the Secretary-General's reports on the situation in Somalia (S/2009/132) and on combating piracy (S/2009/146). Both reports indeed contain detailed and useful information about ongoing developments in the country. I shall limit my remarks on three topics based on those reports.

The first is on the political developments. Turkey welcomes the election of the new President. Likewise, we welcome the appointment of the Prime Minister and his new Government. Turkey has been supporting the Djibouti peace process and hopes that the recent developments herald a better and brighter future for the war-torn people of Somalia. We would like to see formation of a unity government as a sign of the willingness of the Somali people to shape the destiny of their own country.

That said, at this critical moment, it is also our duty as friends of Somalia to underline the serious difficulties awaiting the new Government. However, while doing so, we should be careful not to create an unnecessarily pessimistic mood in and about Somalia which could be counter-productive. Indeed, the unprecedented challenges and difficulties that lie ahead for the Government of Somalia cannot be ignored or denied. It is exactly for this reason that we have to empower the new Government with our support and assistance so that it can address these challenges. For that, first and foremost, it needs financial assistance.

In return, the new Government should take rapid and effective steps towards the implementation of the Djibouti agreement through national reconciliation and political dialogue. It has to pursue an outreach policy vis-à-vis the other groups with a view to including them in this process to the extent possible.

In the short and medium term, with the support of partners and friends, it should have proper security and police forces. Moreover, sustainable programmes to disarm, demobilize and reintegrate should be implemented. Since the Government cannot operate on donations and foreign assistance, it has to seek means to generate revenues for the immediate expenses of the State. Swift action is also required for the rehabilitation or the re-establishment of judicial and corrections systems in Somalia. Human rights violations and other humanitarian issues, especially impunity, have to be addressed.

For the Government to achieve the targets on its agenda, it has to feel itself secure. This brings me to my second point, which is about the need for regional and international peacekeeping operations. Turkey highly commends the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) for its contribution to peace and stability in Somalia. We praise the dedication and the courage of the Ugandan and Burundi forces, who are serving peace under most difficult conditions. They deserve our full support.

Turkey was one of the sponsors of resolution 1863 (2009), which envisaged the deployment of a United Nations peacekeeping operation in Somalia, subject to a further decision of the Council. Turkey sincerely hopes that this deployment would materialize

soon. Yet, developments show that we might face certain delays. We may have to rely solely on AMISOM for some time to come. Therefore, it becomes imperative not only to enhance the capabilities of AMISOM forces, but also to provide the funds that AMISOM needs. In that sense, Turkey welcomes the intention of the Secretary-General to convene a donors conference for the establishment of a trust fund. Turkey will contribute to the fund.

The third point I would like to mention relates to the acts of piracy off the coast of Somalia, which continue to be a source of concern for the international community. In order to operate in the Gulf of Aden and off the coast of Somalia in the fight against piracy and armed robbery at sea, the Turkish Government has allocated a frigate with air assets. The frigate has joined the international efforts carried out under Combined Task Force 151, which was recently launched. Turkey is also a founding member of the Contact Group on Piracy Off the Coast of Somalia, and actively participates in the working groups formed under the Contact Group. Having said that, we should continue to concentrate and cooperate on the elimination of the root causes of piracy, which are embedded in Somalia.

Somalia finally has a unity Government operating from Mogadishu. For that Government to be successful, first and foremost, the people of Somalia should develop full faith in it. We must help the Somali Government develop an image that will gain the confidence of its own people.

Mr. Liu Zhenmin (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Chinese delegation wishes to thank you, Sir, for convening today's meeting. We welcome the report of the Secretary-General on the current situation in Somalia (S/2009/132), and we thank Mr. Ahmedou Ould Abdallah, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia, and Mr. Ramtane Lamamra, Commissioner for Peace and Security of the African Union, for their briefings. We welcome the presence of Mr. Mohamed Abdullahi Omaar, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Somalia, and thank him for his statement.

The question of Somalia has persisted for 18 years, during which enormous suffering has been visited upon the people of Somalia, posing a grave threat to the regional situation in the Horn of Africa and constituting a daunting challenge to the international community. In recent years, with strong support from the United Nations and other international partners, all the Somali parties have strengthened the process of peace talks, which has led to certain positive developments in the situation in the country. But the overall situation in Somalia remains fragile and requires additional efforts by the Somali parties and the international community.

The key to achieving peace in Somalia is to strengthen the country's political foundations. We support the Djibouti peace process and call upon all parties concerned to effectively implement the peace agreement that has been signed.

Once again we congratulate Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed on his election as President of Somalia and we welcome the formation of a new Government. We support the new Somali Government as it works to strengthen the dialogue with various political parties and we call upon all Somali parties to join the process of peace negotiations and political reconciliation. We encourage the new Government promptly to establish effective governing institutions, so that it can exercise authority throughout the territory of the country.

We are highly appreciative of the positive role played by Special Representative Ould Abdallah and we call upon the international community to continue to support the national peace and reconciliation process in Somalia.

A stable and secure environment is needed to achieve peace in Somalia. We are highly appreciative of the excellent work carried out by the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) in extremely difficult conditions, and we welcome the decision of the African Union Peace and Security Council to renew the AMISOM mandate for a further three months. We call upon the international community to continue to provide logistical and financial support for AMISOM.

We condemn all attacks against civilians in Somalia and against AMISOM. We urge all Somali parties to immediately put in place a ceasefire throughout the territory of Somalia and to seek a political settlement. We hope that the joint security and police forces will be put in place as soon as possible, and we call upon the international community to provide the necessary support.

A greater United Nations role is required to achieve peace in Somalia. We endorse the United

Nations support package for AMISOM and welcome the fact that Secretariat sent a technical assessment mission to the area and submitted reports in that connection. We would wish the General Assembly to expedite its consideration of the support package for AMISOM, and we hope that the Secretariat will expedite the establishment of the trust fund. We call upon all countries to continue to provide bilateral assistance to AMISOM.

The Chinese Government recently provided the two major troop contributors to AMISOM — Uganda and Burundi — with 5 million renminbi each for logistic support. China is ready to continue within its means to provide further assistance to the Somalia peace process.

It must not be forgotten that the ultimate purpose of strengthening AMISOM is to create favourable conditions for the deployment of a United Nations peacekeeping operation. The Security Council should meet the long-held expectations of the people of Somalia and of the countries of the African Union by giving favourable consideration to the deployment of a United Nations peacekeeping operation in the country. We look forward to the report of the Secretary-General to be submitted in April.

The coming months will be critical for the peace process in Somalia. The Council's actions in that regard will have a long-term impact on the people of Somalia. The Chinese delegation is ready to work with other members to further promote a greater Security Council role on the question of Somalia.

Mr. Le Luong Minh (Viet Nam): I thank the Secretary-General for his two reports (S/2009/132 and S/2009/146) which focus respectively on the security and piracy situations in Somalia. I also thank Mr. Ahmedou Ould Abdallah for his detailed briefing. I welcome the participation of His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Abdullahi Omaar, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Somalia, and thank him for his statement. I also welcome and thank the representatives of the African Union and the League of Arab States for their participation in this important meeting of the Security Council.

The past few months witnessed some significant progress in the political process in Somalia, including the election of a new President, the establishment of a newly expanded parliament and the formation of an inclusive Government. We reaffirm our belief that, as His Excellency the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Somalia said, peace and security in Somalia can only be achieved through dialogue, negotiation, a willingness to compromise and reconciliation. We welcome the efforts of President Ahmed to make the political process more inclusive by reaching out to various groups in the country.

Despite those encouraging political developments, strengthened by the determination of the people and the leaders of Somalia to promote the implementation of a comprehensive ceasefire, we remain concerned about the volatile security situation, as reflected in a series of attacks against the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), which led to the death or injury of many peacekeepers. We are also concerned about the humanitarian situation, with more than 3 million Somalis in need of humanitarian assistance and many civilians fleeing their homes to escape the fighting. We strongly condemn all such attacks against AMISOM, humanitarian personnel and civilians, and we call for an immediate end to them.

Having taken stock of the current piracy situation off the coast of Somalia and the complexity of the political and security scene throughout that war-torn country, and while commending the operational efforts of Member States within the framework of the Contact Group on Piracy, we wish to emphasize the need for the implementation of all relevant Security Council resolutions and the Djibouti peace process. We share the Secretary-General's view that the scourge of piracy and armed robbery at sea off the coast of Somalia can be resolved through an integrated approach that addresses the conflict, the lack of governance and the absence of sustainable livelihoods on land in Somalia. We support his appeal to the international community to provide the resources necessary to help bring durable peace and stability to Somalia. We stress the importance of providing assistance in order to build the capacity of local and regional stakeholders.

We commend AMISOM for its enduring efforts in Somalia under very difficult circumstances. We are mindful that the resources available to AMISOM still fall far short of the requirements for its full deployment and for sustaining its operations. My delegation supports the Secretary-General's intention to convene an international donor conference to solicit contributions to the trust fund for AMISOM.

Mr. Jurica (Croatia): We would like to join others in thanking the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Ahmedou Ould Abadallah, for his briefing. We are also very grateful for all his hard work in Somalia. In addition, we appreciate the intervention by His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Abdullahi Omaar, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia.

We share the encouragement expressed around the table with respect to the positive political developments in the Djibouti peace process, in particular the election of Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed as President of Somalia. We hope that his election and, more important, his future actions will encourage those Somali partners still outside the Djibouti process to join in. In that connection, we expect that the determination of President Ahmed, as expressed in his inaugural speech, to reach out to all Somalis will yield concrete results quite soon, thus paving the way for more inclusive political arrangements and genuine national reconciliation. The Council, for its part, will use all its leverage to provide support for the ongoing political process, including by persuading others to join in.

Unfortunately, the security situation does not offer the same encouragement, which makes the recent positive developments on the political track even more vulnerable. Although the worst possible scenario of widespread fighting in the aftermath of the withdrawal of Ethiopian forces did not materialize, the continuing insurgency by Al-Shabaab and the increased targeting of AMISOM troops and humanitarian workers are of the utmost concern.

As for the security options before us, we firmly believe that Security Council resolution 1863 (2009) of 16 January 2009 has offered the only viable and realistic security options available at present, namely, the enhancing of AMISOM and Somali capacity-building, in particular of the joint security and police forces established under the Djibouti peace process. We have fully supported the realism and the gradual nature of such an approach as the basis for our future actions. Also, we find the conclusions of the technical assessment mission — in particular the benchmarks for the eventual peacekeeping operation, as set out in the report (S/2009/132) — helpful in that respect.

Equally, we very much welcome the intention of the Secretary-General, as expressed in the report before us, to convene a donors conference and set up trust funds for AMISOM and for the capacity-building of Somali institutions. In addition, we wish to express our appreciation to AMISOM, whose troops are operating in extremely difficult conditions, in particular since the withdrawal of Ethiopian forces. We commend the troop-contributing countries Uganda and Burundi for their persistence and offer the hope that others will follow suit in honouring their pledges.

My delegation shares the grave concerns expressed by Council members regarding the effects of the continuing deterioration in security on an already-dire humanitarian situation and on the civilian population. In a situation in which more than 3 million Somalis are in dire need of assistance, humanitarian access should continue to be a priority for the international community as a whole. Furthermore, we find the reports from the field about civilians being at the mercy of all parties involved in the conflict — including the targeted killings of persons linked to the Transitional Federal Government, the Islamic Courts Union, the United Nations and civil society organizations — extremely disturbing.

All parties to the conflict should be held accountable for violations of international humanitarian law, including guarantees for the unimpeded delivery of humanitarian aid. In that light, we call once again for an end to the culture of impunity. We commend the initiatives by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Ahmedou Ould Abdallah, to start the deliberations on the need to set up a mechanism to deal with the issues of justice and reconciliation. We hope to see concrete results from that praiseworthy and much-needed effort in the near future.

Finally, as the latest report of the Secretary-General on piracy (S/2009/146) has reminded us, there remains a critical need to tackle problems in Somalia with a multifaceted approach. My country subscribes to that view, which aims to ensure that the political process, the African Union's peacekeeping efforts, the strengthening of law-enforcement institutions and capacity-building initiatives work in tandem. In conclusion, I would like to mention that the Croatian Government has provided several military officers to join Operation Atalanta in the fight against piracy off the coast of Somalia.

Mr. Mayr-Harting (Austria): Like others, I would like to thank Special Representative Ould Abdallah for his very important and comprehensive briefing. We are also grateful for the excellent reports received from the Secretary-General (S/2009/132 and S/2009/146). We warmly welcome the participation of Mr. Mohamed Abdullahi Omaar, Foreign Minister of Somalia, and we were happy to listen to Mr. Ramtane Lamamra, Commissioner for Peace and Security of the African Union.

Austria fully aligns itself with the statement to be delivered later by the Czech Presidency of the European Union. Our comments are meant to complement that statement.

Despite a difficult political situation, a precarious security situation and an alarming humanitarian situation, Somalis have achieved important progress in the Djibouti peace process. Austria commends that development and congratulates President Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed on his election. We support the legitimate Government and the continuation of a political process, which should be as broad-based as possible.

The international community must act now and lend its support to Somali efforts to build security and rule-of-law institutions, as well as to embark on a reconciliation process. The Foreign Minister spoke of all those goals, which we support. For that purpose, we also need to strengthen the United Nations Political Office for Somalia (UNPOS). We therefore wholeheartedly support the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report in that regard.

A number of resolutions on Somalia have been adopted by the Security Council within the past three months. Those resolutions must be implemented in good faith, including resolution 1844 (2008), which targets those who threaten the peace, security and stability of Somalia.

The security environment and the humanitarian situation also need our utmost attention: 3.2 million people — 43 per cent of Somalia's population — are in need of humanitarian assistance and 1.9 million are in a state of humanitarian emergency. Currently, according to our data, there are over 1 million internally displaced persons. Unfortunately, the progress in the peace process has not yet resulted in an alleviation of that situation.

The human rights situation in Somalia has been of great concern as well, as was rightly noted by the technical assessment mission. Especially worrying is the situation of women, in particular violence against women, as well as traditional harmful practices that are still widespread. In addition, all the reported human rights violations have been committed — or most of them — with total impunity. Austria fully supports the capacity of UNPOS to focus on the incorporation of justice and accountability mechanisms in Somalia, as suggested by the Secretary-General in his report.

Civilians, United Nations staff and, recently, AMISOM personnel as well as staff of local non-governmental organizations have been targeted, abducted and murdered. Austria pays its respect to humanitarian workers who continue to deliver much-needed humanitarian aid. We also thank the troop-contributing countries to AMISOM, Uganda and Burundi, for their continuous commitment and engagement in bringing stability and security to Somalia. We join others in condemning the attacks against AMISOM that we have heard and spoken about today.

Austria fully supports the strengthening of AMISOM. The United Nations support package is an important pillar in that respect. We are therefore looking forward to the Secretary-General's report to be issued in April, which will inform us on the progress in the political process and the security situation on the ground and which will serve as a basis for our future deliberations.

It is very important for the authority and the effectiveness of any international presence in Somalia that obligations under international humanitarian law be fully respected by all sides. The protection of civilians, especially women and children, must be a concern and must be ensured by all parties.

As far as piracy is concerned, it is important not to see it only as a threat to key international shipping lanes, but also as a factor further aggravating the security and humanitarian situation in Somalia. Apart from putting humanitarian supplies at risk, it certainly also plays a role in financing the activities of what one might call spoilers of the stabilization process and particularly illegal flows of arms in violation of the embargo. Austria therefore stresses the importance of focused activities to curb piracy in the region and of course as a member of the European Union (EU) we

fully support the EU's naval operation, Operation Atalanta.

We look forward to continuing and intensifying the close cooperation between the international community and Somalia in the interest of Somalia and all of its people.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya.

At the outset, I wish to express our appreciation to Mr. Ahmedou Ould Abdallah, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia, for his valuable briefing. I also wish to thank our brother Mohamed Abdullahi Omaar, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Somalia, for his presence and for the information he provided to us today on the situation in Somalia. I also express our thanks to Mr. Ramtane Lamamra, Commissioner for Peace and Security of the African Union, for his valuable briefing.

In the past few months, the leaders of the Somali people have affirmed their determination to emerge from the quagmire of the civil war in which that country has been embroiled for the past 18 years. The parliament was expanded, followed by the election of Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed as the new President of the country. A Prime Minister was appointed and a Government was then formed and endorsed by parliament. Those are all positive indicators of the parties' commitment to the national reconciliation process under the Djibouti agreement. Dialogue among all parties to the conflict in Somalia and the abandonment of policies of exclusion are the only path to a permanent political settlement.

We believe that the desire of President Sharif to communicate with all parties that oppose the Djibouti process, with whatever their various political views, is a first step in the right direction. For our part, we urge all factions of the Somali population to respond to the call of President Sharif and to adopt a spirit of tolerance and overcome the past in order to spread peace and reconciliation throughout the country.

My delegation welcomes the completion of Ethiopia's full withdrawal from Somalia. We are grateful for the commitment of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) to continue working under difficult conditions. We urge African Union (AU) member States that have pledged to contribute troops to make the necessary arrangements to deploy them without delay. We also call upon the international community to provide the resources to enable those States to contribute troops to AMISOM. We hope that the United Nations logistical support package for AMISOM will help to apply United Nations criteria with regard to the participating troops.

The security situation in Somalia is of great concern despite the fact that no major combat operations have taken place since the withdrawal of the Ethiopian forces. The AU Mission has been targeted by repeated attacks, and armed groups still control several areas of the country. That has had a negative impact on the human rights situation and humanitarian conditions.

On the humanitarian front, the continued deterioration of humanitarian conditions in Somalia continues to be of concern. Over 3 million people require humanitarian aid, and the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) continues to increase. The IDPs are not expected to return home anytime soon, while armed groups continue to target humanitarian organizations, whether to loot equipment or to abduct or kill workers. On this occasion, I wish to commend the World Food Programme and its personnel for their courage and for their decision to continue providing humanitarian aid in the southern and central areas of Somalia despite the difficult conditions.

On another front, with regard to the encouraging response of the international community in combating piracy off the Somalian coast, we think that piracy is a natural response to the unstable situation in Somalia and cannot be addressed in isolation from the political situation in the country. Combating piracy therefore requires a multidimensional approach based on a political dialogue among all parties, stemming from the Djibouti process and backed by a peacekeeping mission and efforts to revive State institutions and build capacity, in particular relating to law enforcement.

In that regard, we encourage cooperation among States, international organizations and United Nations bodies within the context of international law to combat piracy and we support considering the formulation of a national and regional legal framework to facilitate the arrest and trial of those suspected of committing acts of piracy and armed robbery at sea. We affirm the pivotal role of the United Nations in

coordinating the fight against piracy and in providing information, and we urge all Member States to offer information on their efforts to combat piracy.

My delegation welcomes the Secretary-General's decision to hold a donors conference in the coming days to collect contributions for the AMISOM trust fund and for building the capacity of Somali institutions. We urge all countries that can to contribute generously. We look forward to the report that the Secretary-General will submit by 15 April on the current situation in Somalia and on the progress made in fully deploying the African Union Mission and in expanding it to become a United Nations peacekeeping mission.

The report will discuss political progress and the security situation on the ground so that the Council can use it in its decision on deploying United Nations peacekeeping forces in Somalia. We also believe that the lack of stability and the security situation must not be used as an excuse to oppose the deployment of a United Nations force in Somalia. United Nations experience shows that deploying United Nations forces to unstable areas has proved to be effective in the past.

Once again, my country's delegation reaffirms its commitment to work towards national reconciliation in Somalia and we assure His Excellency the Foreign Minister — who has informed me that President Sharif may arrive in Libya tomorrow or the day after — that we are in contact with all parties and factions. Libya is the only State that for years has had an embassy in Somalia. We have set up a hospital in Djibouti to treat wounded Somalis and we continue to offer food and medical aid. We have provided hundreds of scholarships to Somali students, the Tripoli University has produced many Somali graduates, including President Sharif. We will continue to offer aid to the Government, including vehicles, administrative tools and equipment, and we will work with the AU and the League of Arab States in that area.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of the Czech Republic.

Mr. Kaiser (Czech Republic): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU). The candidate countries Turkey, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

Let me begin by thanking Mr. Ould Abdallah, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his comprehensive briefing. I would also like to welcome His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Abdullahi Omaar, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Somalia, and thank him for his contribution to today's debate.

During the past two months, the Djibouti peace process has generated a new scenario for Somalia with opportunities for an inclusive political solution. The EU welcomes the expansion of the transitional parliament, the election of President Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed, followed by the appointment of the Prime Minister, Omar Sharmarke, and his Cabinet. The EU encourages President Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed and Prime Minister Omar Sharmarke to continue their efforts to achieve a cessation of hostilities and to create an inclusive peace process involving all parties to the conflict. Such a process must also give women a voice. The EU welcomes the intention of the President to reach out to those groups that remain opposed to the Djibouti process.

The EU looks forward to working with the President, the enlarged Transitional Federal Parliament and the Government of national unity in their endeavours and will continue to support the political process as it takes on challenges and opportunities to further consolidate reconciliation, to restore peace for all the Somali people and to rebuild the country.

Despite positive developments at the political level, the situation on the ground remains extremely volatile. Security constraints continue to hamper humanitarian operations across Somalia and have led to a wave of attacks on humanitarian workers, peacekeepers and human rights defenders, with the civilian population bearing the brunt of the casualties. The European Union acknowledges that the support of the international community to the Somali Joint Security Force and the Somali Police Service is key.

In that context, the EU condemns the attack of 22 February on AMISOM, leading to the death of 11 Burundian peacekeepers and injuries to others, and those against humanitarian workers. The humanitarian situation remains critical. More than 3 million people

in Somalia still need humanitarian assistance. The acts of piracy off the coast of Somalia remain a source of real concern to the Somali people and, in particular, to the millions who depend on the assistance transferred to Somalia by sea by the World Food Programme.

The EU welcomes the Secretary-General's recommendations contained in his comprehensive report (S/2009/132). The Security Council has expressed, in resolution 1863 (2009), its intent to establish a United Nations peacekeeping operation in Somalia as a follow-on force to the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), subject to its further decision by 1 June 2009. In any case, in the upcoming months, AMISOM, as well as Somali security institutions, will continue to play an important role in ensuring security, stability and law and order and in supporting the political process and facilitating humanitarian activities. That is why both the reinforcement of AMISOM and the establishment of an effective Somali security sector should be supported, as widely as possible, by the international community. In that regard, the European Union supports the requests contained in Security Council resolution 1863 (2009) to provide a United Nations logistical support package to support AMISOM and to establish a trust fund.

Through its Joint Strategy Paper 2008-2013, the European Union continues to ensure medium- to long-term assistance to Somalia. Priority is given to promoting a peaceful and secure environment, human rights, democratic processes and institution-building. The European Community's support programme for the same period amounts to €215 million, with good governance, security, education, economic development and support of livelihoods as priority sectors.

With regard to support for AMISOM, the European Commission has so far committed a total of €40 million. Recognizing the need for immediate actions in favour of the Somali security sector, financial support from the European Commission and EU member States to the civilian Somali Police Force will also continue, through the United Nations Development Programme, under its Rule of Law and Security Programme and/or through other new channels, such as the African Union and AMISOM.

In February, the African Union requested that the European Union financially support the immediate and short-term needs of the AMISOM police component. The European Commission is, in principle, open to contributing through the African Peace Facility.

The direct engagement of the European Union in the fight against piracy started in September 2008, when it completed the actions launched by some European member States in November 2007, which continued until 8 December 2008, when they were replaced by a naval operation, Operation Atalanta. In accordance with the provisions of resolution 1846 (2008), Operation Atalanta focuses on three primary tasks: first, the protection of World Food Programme shipping providing assistance to Somalis dependent on humanitarian assistance; secondly, the escort of some of the most vulnerable vessels in the area of responsibility; and thirdly, to the utmost extent possible, the deterrence and repression of acts of piracy through surveillance and patrolling in the maritime areas where the pirates have proved to be most active.

However, suppressing piracy off the coast of Somalia can only be achieved by addressing the root causes of the problem, which the instability and the lack of rule of law and good governance, and by assisting the development of the capacities of the State of Somalia.

Operation Atalanta currently has a strength of some 1,000 personnel from 12 member States. The naval force is currently comprised of five frigates provided by France, Germany, Greece, Spain and Italy. Helicopters and maritime patrol aircraft were made available by France and Spain. One more Spanish warship is expected to join the operation soon, as are three Swedish ships in May. In August, Norway will deploy a frigate, and the Netherlands and Belgium will deploy their frigates in the second semester of 2009. Other contributors such as Croatia, Ukraine and Switzerland are also considering possible contributions.

The European Union operation is commanded by a British admiral from multinational headquarters in Northwood, United Kingdom. That headquarters is also the location for the Maritime Security Centre-Horn of Africa, a joint enterprise between the EU military operation and the shipping industry, which is helping to ensure the most effective interaction with the industry and the widest possible application of agreed best practice, thus minimizing risk.

The EU operation is effectively fighting piracy together with other countries that have deployed their naval units in the Gulf of Aden and that work with Combined Task Force 151, operating in the area, as well as countries of the region.

The EU Secretary-General and High Representative, Javier Solana, stated, in his letter addressed to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, that the European Union is ready, through its naval Operation Atalanta, to contribute, within its means and capabilities, to the protection at sea of the United Nations vessels delivering the logistical support package to AMISOM. In this context, it is very important for the European Union to continue to have an operational contact point in the Secretariat in New York, in addition to the focal point of the United Nations Political Office for Somalia in Nairobi.

In conclusion, allow me to reiterate that the international community should continue to support the political process in Somalia. This support should be complemented by the efforts of Somalis themselves, who are ultimately responsible for the achievement of full national reconciliation. The EU stands ready to continue to assist Somalia. The EU is, inter alia, currently working on a comprehensive and coherent approach towards the Horn of Africa, including the regional dimension of the situation in Somalia.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now call on the representative of Norway.

Ms. Enge (Norway): I thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to speak, and I thank His Excellency the Foreign Minister of Somalia, Special Representative Ould Abdallah and African Union Commissioner Lamamra for their briefings earlier.

The past few months have brought about remarkable changes in Somalia. We have seen broad-based reconciliation emerge from the Djibouti process. We have seen a peaceful leadership transition by constitutional means. And we have not seen the instability and increased violence that many feared would erupt after the Ethiopian troops pulled out. Violence has diminished, Mogadishu is more peaceful, the new leadership is back in the capital and people have started, tentatively, to return to their homes.

This is a commendable achievement by the Somali people and their leaders, and we are encouraged by their progress. We would also like to recognize the efforts of Special Representative Ould Abdallah and his staff at the United Nations Political Office for Somalia, a steady source of inspiration in finding compromises to push the process forward.

We are encouraged, but we know there is still a long way to go. The new Somali leaders are facing tremendous challenges. The security situation is still tenuous. Humanitarian needs are overwhelming. Human rights and impunity are major concerns, and the reconciliation process must continue to move forward. The list of achievements has grown, but so have people's expectations. Somalis at home and abroad are eager to see a peace that will bring not only protection, but also a more prosperous future.

We know that there are still groups and elements in the country that are prepared to use violent means to overturn the achievements that have been made. This includes attacks on African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) peacekeepers. Such attacks can only be condemned in the strongest terms. We pay tribute to the peacekeepers from Burundi and Uganda, who stay on in spite of extremely difficult circumstances.

The international community must stand together in supporting the new Somali leadership against the elements that try to destroy the peace process. Norway supports the Security Council decision to establish a trust fund for support to AMISOM. We agree on the need for a donors conference to solicit contributions for the fund and for the capacity-building of Somali institutions, including the Joint Security Force and the Somali Police Force.

But peacebuilding requires more than establishing the instruments to deal with immediate threats to security. The new leadership must continue its efforts to reach out to those groups that are still not part of the peace and reconciliation process.

It is also of utmost importance that the leadership be able to respond to the people's needs for basic services by providing safe access for humanitarian assistance and by focusing on recovery and reconstruction. For the past few years, Norway has committed approximately $35 million annually to Somalia. As co-founders of the International Contact Group on Somalia and chair of the friends of Somalia group, we will continue to be actively engaged in responding to the needs of the people of Somalia.

Off the coast of Somalia, we are pleased to see that the international community has stepped up its efforts to safeguard the sea lanes. In the Council, in December, Norway pledged to contribute to these naval operations (S/PV.6046). I can confirm that Norway will send one of its new frigates to participate in the European Union Operation Atalanta. The preparation for the deployment of the vessel in August this year is well under way.

Norway participates actively in the international Contact Group on Piracy Off the Coast of Somalia, and we commend the United States for its initiative to establish that Group. We look forward to the continued discussions in the Group on key issues such as enhanced coordination and close cooperation in order to bring to justice those who commit acts of piracy and armed robbery at sea.

A sustainable solution to the piracy problem can only be found through a comprehensive approach in which the Somali authorities, including the regional government in Puntland, have to play a key role. For this reason, it might be useful to establish closer cooperation and coordination between the current operations at sea and the authorities on land, especially with regard to coastal surveillance.

The new President and his Government should know that the international community is ready to fully cooperate with the new leadership. But we know that the challenges during the remaining two years of the transition period will be enormous. We will follow developments in the coming months closely, and we stand ready to offer our advice and support whenever needed.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the representative of Malaysia.

Mr. Zainuddin (Malaysia): Mr. President, let me at the outset express how pleased we are to see you preside over our meeting today, and we thank you for allowing us to participate in it.

We wish to welcome Foreign Minister Omaar here today and congratulate him on his appointment. We wish to thank Mr. Ould Abdallah, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia, for his presentation.

We also wish to thank the Secretary-General for his report on the situation in Somalia (S/2009/132) and his report pursuant to the Security Council resolution 1846 (2008) (S/2009/146). My delegation noted the positive developments highlighted in the two reports. We warmly welcome the strong commitments by the international community to persevere in the efforts to resolve the situation in Somalia. But despite these developments, there remain many more challenges that need to be addressed.

Malaysia condemns the acts of piracy and armed robberies at sea off the coast of Somalia. The situation is a serious threat to the flow of global maritime trade. It endangers the lives of crew members on board the hijacked or attacked ships. The situation also causes serious impediments to conveyance of international humanitarian assistance to Somalia and of the projected supplies of United Nations assistance to the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM).

Malaysia was directly drawn to the situation of piracy off the coast of Somalia when three Malaysian-flagged ships were hijacked in the Gulf of Aden between August and December of 2008. We dispatched five Royal Malaysian Navy vessels to the Gulf of Aden in rotation. The objective then was to render the necessary assistance in the effort to seek the release of the hijacked Malaysian ships. Currently, the Malaysian Navy provides escort and necessary security coverage to other Malaysian-flagged vessels plying the sea in the area. Malaysian Navy vessels have also provided security to vessels of other countries upon request and have been successful in thwarting a couple of attempts by pirates to board and hijack such foreign vessels.

Malaysia had raised serious concerns to the international community over the piracy and armed robbery off the coast of Somalia. We raised the issue during the general debate at the sixty-third session of the General Assembly and also during the meeting of our Foreign Minister with the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, in September of last year. Malaysia urged the international community to immediately and collectively formulate concrete steps and a framework of cooperation to address the problem. With this position in mind, we joined other States in co-sponsoring resolution 1846 (2008) in particular.

Malaysia welcomes the anti-piracy operations undertaken by Member States and regional and international organizations, and in particular welcomes the collaborative efforts by neighbouring littoral States in that endeavour. We firmly believe, however, that the United Nations should take a leadership role, including

through establishing a United Nations naval force to combat piracy and armed robbery at sea off the coast of Somalia.

We share the view that, fundamentally, the long-lasting solution to the problem of piracy off the coast of Somalia can be achieved only with political stability, the prevalence of the rule of law and an improved socio-economic situation in the country. Therefore, the counter-piracy action should be carried out in a holistic manner that involves political solutions and reform of the security sector and in the economic and human rights spheres in Somalia.

Finally, let me reiterate Malaysia's continued readiness to work and cooperate with others in the international efforts to resolve the scourge of piracy and armed robbery off the coast of Somalia and in the resolution of the overall situation in Somalia.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): In accordance with rule 39 of the provisional rules of procedure, I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Samir Hosni, Director of African Administration and the Afro-Arab Cooperation Department of the League of Arab States.

Mr. Hosni (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to thank the Foreign Minister of Somalia, Mr. Omaar, and Mr. Ould Abdallah and Mr. Lamamra for the detailed statements that they have given. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you, Mr. President, and members of the Security Council, for giving me this opportunity to address the Council on the situation in Somalia.

This statement comes at a critical and promising juncture in the peace process that has been ably led by Mr. Ahmedou Ould Abdallah, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia, with the active participation of the African Union and the League of Arab States and the clear support of the international community. In this context, allow me to briefly make the following observations.

First, while the Arab States welcomes the important measures that have been taken to implement the Djibouti agreement that was signed last August — the most important of which is the formation of an expanded parliament and the extension of the transitional period for the work of Somali institutions, as well as the election of Mr. Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed as President and the formation of a national unity Government under Mr. Omar Abdirashid Ali Sharmarke's leadership — at the same time it affirms the urgent need to offer tangible support for this process at the political, financial and material levels.

We are facing a truly positive development that must be sustained with the necessary capacity to implement all of these changes. Therefore, we reaffirm the need urgently to offer all forms of financial and logistic support to the Somali Government so that it can establish effective State institutions and implement its programmes for reconciliation, security and stability and provide basic services for the Somali people.

Despite the fact that the Arab League is neither a donor nor a financial organization, it responded to the call by the African Union Peace and Security Council and transferred last week $1 million to the Somali Government's account so that it could start establishing the Joint Security Forces as stipulated in the Djibouti agreement — to be comprised of 10,000 troops — for the purposes of maintaining law and order and to guarantee the sustainability of the current Somali institutions. The Arab summit to be held at the end of this month in Doha, the capital of Qatar, will have on its agenda support for the newly formed Somali institutions.

Secondly, we welcome, support and reaffirm the positive direction that the Somali national unity Government has taken in terms of actively seeking national reconciliation with all factions of Somali society, domestically and abroad. We urge all Somali factions to renounce violence and reconsider their positions and join the march towards Somali national reconciliation.

Thirdly, we also welcome the efforts of and the role played by the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and we call for offering it the urgent logistic and financial support it needs so that the African Union (AU) can increase the size of the Mission to the authorized size, namely, 8,000 troops.

We strongly condemn the recent attacks against AMISOM's personnel, which have led to the deaths of 12 peacekeepers from Burundi and have wounded 17 other peacekeepers, not to mention the numerous Somali civilian casualties. We highly commend the AMISOM forces, who work under very difficult conditions in Somalia, and we call on all parties to offer support to those who work on behalf of us all, the international community, to establish peace and stability in the country.

Fourthly, we join the request of the African Union to deploy a United Nations peacebuilding force in Somalia. The Security Council must respond to the strong, shared desire of the Government of Somalia, the AU and the Arab League for continued support to AMISOM and build upon it and authorize the United Nations to take over responsibility for peacekeeping in Somalia at an early stage.

Fifthly, I reaffirm the organic link between piracy, on the one hand, and the Somali question in general, on the other. This issue forces us to seriously consider the best and most effective way to support efforts to establish peace and stability in Somalia, especially after Somali parties succeeded in the implementation of the Djibouti agreement. We, the international community, must show adequate support for them and protect the achievements that have been made towards peace in Somalia. We must also prevent any regression in efforts towards a settlement; that could have negative effects in the political and security spheres which would be very grave indeed if, God forbid, they should take place.

Finally, the reconstruction of Somalia must be at the top of the international community's agenda. For our part, at the Arab regional level, the League of Arab States, in coordination with the African Union, the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the United Nations, will this year convene a conference on the reconstruction of Somalia. At that conference, the Somali Government will present its development plans and the necessary feasibility studies. The Arab States and Arab investment funds will participate in the conference; we hope indeed that everybody will participate.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): Mr. Mohamed Abdullahi Omaar, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Somalia, has asked to make a statement in response to comments made. There being no objection, I give him the floor.

Mr. Omaar (Somalia): I wish first, on behalf of my Government and my people, to express our gratitude for the deep sympathy and appreciation that all participants have shown for the Somali people in the circumstances that currently prevail. I think that the international community and the Somali people are in partnership not only on the issues of Somalia but on those related to the subregion as well.

Essentially, I believe, the Somalis have delivered part of what they can do. On the political aspects, we have responded — and I think we have delivered. It is 30 days since the Government was put together. It will be another 30 days before the pledging conference for the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). That means that 60 days will have gone out of the 100-day target we have set ourselves: we will be left with only 40 days. I therefore want to reinforce the urgency and immediacy of the situation.

Finally, I want to say that we have a balance sheet. In our view, we have four points on the plus side and four points on the minus side. On the plus side we have political will; we have public momentum; we have 3,300 joint security forces that are ready in terms of human resources; and we have the willingness and the receptivity of the international community and the regional countries. Those are the four pluses.

The four points on the minus side are these: we have the spoilers who so far reject peace and stability; we have piracy; we have a lack of resources; and we have the past failures to deal with, in terms of both history and perception.

We can do nothing about the past. We are not responsible for that, and for that reason we ask the Council not to place us in a chicken-and-egg situation. We are living in the present, and we need the Council's urgent assistance to enable us to meet the targets for the 100 days. This is a dynamic situation, yet we believe we can establish peace and bring more people on board and into the peace process. But we need urgent attention, in parallel, to AMISOM and to our security forces.

If we can get to that benchmark, I think the next meeting will be far more positive.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I give the floor to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia and would ask him to be concise in his remarks.

Mr. Ould Abdallah: I will be brief. I wish first to offer a point of information. It is my understanding that the conference for the mobilization of resources for the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and Somali security forces, about which we have been talking, will be held on 22 April in Brussels, subject to confirmation with all members. That is because of logistical and a number of other considerations.

Secondly, I thank the Council for its renewed interest and concern with respect to the tragedy of Somalia, especially its rejection of permanent blackmail by a number of Somalis who know how eager we in New York are to look at the headlines and websites: one grenade makes a huge difference; one mortar shell makes a huge difference. I do not like to compare today's world hot spots with Somalia, but if we look at the statistics of the number of deaths, which are terrible, Somalia is in a difficult position, but the situation is not as bad as it might be. It is permanent blackmail that I am talking about, and we should free ourselves from that permanent blackmail.

We are talking about people, and they need peace. They are ready for peace. We will look to the April report to provide accurate figures. We will be in the field; my deputy was in Mogadishu last week.

Before concluding, I would like to thank the delegation of the United States of America for mentioning the negative role of Eritrea. Somalia has no border with Eritrea. I am a civil servant, but, like members of the Council, I have seen the report with a call by a Government which is normally friendly — the two countries are members of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and they have no common border — inviting the destabilization of this country. That needed to be noted, and I am grateful to the United States delegation for having spoken of it. Many members of the Council have told me the same thing, and I hope that it will be raised next time. I do not want it to be made into an issue, but it has to be raised.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda. A statement to the press by the President regarding this meeting will be issued.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.6096

Security Council

Sixty-fourth year

Provisional

6096th meeting

Friday, 20 March 2009, 3 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Dabbashi	(Libyan Arab Jamahiriya)
Members:	Austria	Mr. Mayr-Harting
	Burkina Faso	Mr. Kafando
	China	Mr. Liu Zhenmin
	Costa Rica	Mr. Urbina
	Croatia	Mr. Jurica
	France	Mr. Ripert
	Japan	Mr. Takasu
	Mexico	Mr. Heller
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Turkey	Mr. İlkin
	Uganda	Mr. Rugunda
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir John Sawers
	United States of America	Ms. Rice
	Viet Nam	Mr. Le Luong Minh

Agenda

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A.

09-27501 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of the Czech Republic and the Sudan, in which they request to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the consideration of the item without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Abdelmannan (Sudan) took a seat at the Council table; Mr. Kaiser (Czech Republic) took the seat reserved for him at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Rashid Khalikov, Director of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

It is so decided.

I invite Mr. Khalikov to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear a briefing by Mr. Rashid Khalikov, Director of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. I now give him the floor.

Mr. Khalikov: I thank you, Sir, for this opportunity to brief the Council on the humanitarian situation in the northern Sudan.

In the two and a half weeks since the Government of the Sudan decided to suspend the operations of three national and expel 13 international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from the northern Sudan, the United Nations has continued to advocate at all levels for a reversal of this decision. The needs of vulnerable people continue to be the first and main consideration of this effort. The Secretary-General has been in close contact with Arab and African leaders and members of this Council, all of whom have expressed their concern about the plight of the vulnerable people across the Sudan. We are equally concerned that the decision has resulted in very harsh treatment in Darfur and Khartoum of staff members and organizations that had been invited as guests of the Government of the Sudan to assist the Sudanese people.

While we continue to press for the reversal of this decision and to underscore its impact on the lives of the Sudanese population, the United Nations and the Government of the Sudan agreed to complete a series of rapid assessments in the three Darfur states. Teams have been tasked to ascertain the gaps in four life-saving sectors: food aid, health and nutrition, shelter and, lastly, water and sanitation. The teams have also assessed the capacity available to cover the immediate life-threatening needs. The findings will be finalized this weekend with Government counterparts in Khartoum. We should be able to speak more next week about their impact on the wider assistance effort in Darfur.

Since Assistant Secretary-General Bragg briefed the Security Council on 6 March, there have been significant signs of an erosion of humanitarian response capacity, with a concurrent impact on the lives of people in Darfur. We see this particularly in the camps, but we believe that gaps may also be opening up in rural areas where there is no longer a humanitarian presence. For example, in Zam Zam camp, near El Fasher, the departure of two key NGOs leaves the remaining, smaller agencies to cope with more than 36,000 newly-arrived internally displaced persons. It may be recalled that these people were forced to flee after fighting in Muhajariya in the South Sudan. These began with clashes between the Sudan Liberation Army-Minnawi and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), and led to fighting between the Sudan Armed Forces and JEM that included air attacks in and around the town by the Sudanese air force in January and February. The departure of Médecins sans Frontières-France from Nertiti in West Darfur has left the Ministry of Health, UNICEF and the World Health

Organization without an implementing partner to carry out vaccination campaigns and treatment for the meningitis outbreak in Jebel Mara. The loss of partners has led to a similar situation in Kalma and prevented the mass immunization campaign that has been so desperately needed.

Overall, it has become clear that the loss of the support provided to local NGOs and Government line ministries has eroded operational management capacity in key sectors. It is also troubling that the Government has continued to seize humanitarian assets. In one particular case, the Government has still not returned control of a United Nations warehouse, containing shelter and other items, to the United Nations. We are grateful that the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation (UNAMID) in Darfur has helped the humanitarian community protect many essential supplies in the past two weeks, but it is regrettable that this continues to be necessary, especially in areas controlled by the Government.

I should also note that the impact of the decision is now being felt elsewhere, in particular in the three protocol areas of Blue Nile, Southern Kordofan and Abyei. The delivery of humanitarian and development assistance in those areas is crucial to the successful implementation of the already fragile Comprehensive Peace Agreement.

The loss of operational capacity is not the only challenge we are facing on the ground. Insecurity affecting beneficiaries and aid workers alike has been increasing for quite some time. The kidnapping of two Sudanese and three expatriate staff members of Médecins sans Frontières in North Darfur temporarily halted all operations in rural areas of that state. We are grateful for the work of the Sudanese authorities to help secure their release.

Regrettably, this abduction is part of a wider pattern. Over the past two weeks, three separate attacks on UNAMID saw one peacekeeper killed and three others injured. We urge the Government to minimize its rhetoric against foreigners in the media and to ensure the safety and security of all United Nations and associated staff. We also urge armed groups in Darfur to take active steps to ensure that United Nations and NGO staff stay safe.

On 15 March, we noted with concern remarks by President Al-Bashir referring to the possible departure of all foreign humanitarian organizations in the Sudan in a year's time. The Humanitarian Coordinator will take this up further with the Government.

As the conflict continues, and as many parts of Darfur continue to be unstable or are under the influence of the rebel groups, the work of the United Nations and its partners will continue to be vital in helping Sudanese citizens affected by conflict receive the aid to which they have the right. We urge all leaders in Darfur — State and non-State — to facilitate the provision of life-saving assistance to civilians in need.

There is no doubt that our ability to help the people of Darfur and northern Sudan has been seriously compromised. The current atmosphere of fear and uncertainty facing all aid organizations is affecting the assistance available to the people of Darfur. The hard-won partnership between the Government and aid organizations has been cast aside in a way that raises questions as to how this relationship can move forward. We must find a way to decrease tensions and ensure the timely and sustainable provision of protection and humanitarian assistance, based on the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality.

We urge the Government of the Sudan to use the mechanisms established explicitly for the purpose of resolving disagreements. We also believe that the provisions of Sudanese law and the agreements with the international community, including the Joint Communiqué on the facilitation of humanitarian assistance in Darfur, should be respected and used. We want to engage in a transparent and productive dialogue with the Government based on these laws and agreements.

The safety and security of all aid workers — national and international — and of commodities and assets, whether owned by NGOs, United Nations agencies or Member States, must be assured. We look forward to the results of the joint assessment missions, which will be important to show the scale of the gaps and the capacity needed to fill them.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Mr. Khalikov for his briefing.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Sudan.

Mr. Abdelmannan (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I should like to congratulate you, Sir, on

your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council this month. I also welcome the interest that your presidency has focused on the affairs of our African continent, most recently with respect to support for the African Union's peacekeeping capacities. This demonstrates the wisdom of your brotherly country, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, as it assumes the presidency of the African Union, the United Nations principal partner in Darfur.

My delegation has closely followed the circumstances that have prompted the convening of today's meeting of the Security Council at a time when the Council's programme includes consultations on Darfur, scheduled for 26 March, at which the Joint African Union-United Nations Chief Mediator for Darfur, Mr. Djibril Bassolé, will give a comprehensive briefing on the political process and other relevant actions concerning the settlement of the Darfur problem.

It seems to me that the political track is not a priority for some people who are seeking to fan the flames and invent crises in an open attempt to divert the international community's attention from the broad international and regional rejection of the legally and politically flawed approach adopted by the so-called International Criminal Court (ICC) against the Sudanese State, Government and people. These people have sought to fabricate and inflate a problem with respect to the decision of the Government of the Sudan to expel a number of non-governmental organizations that have crossed every red line and dared to prejudice the sovereignty of the country and take advantage of the kindness of the Sudanese people.

As we have heard, these organizations are the guests of the Sudan — a fact that my country has taken fully into account. However, guests are bound by the rules of hospitality to remain in the places specifically assigned to them and not to enter the private rooms of their host.

The decision of the Government of the Sudan is a legitimate sovereign decision that we will never reverse. It is not up for discussion, especially since the Government of the Sudan has not expelled every organization working in my country. The organizations that have been expelled number 13 out of a total of some 118 and represent a mere 7 per cent of those working in the Sudan. Thus, it is false to depict the situation as if the Sudan had expelled all organizations.

The decision made by the President of the Sudan to "Sudanize" volunteer work in the country should be supported, rather than denigrated, by the United Nations and the Security Council. The decision is based on the premise that the State should assume its full responsibility in this matter.

I must stress here in this Chamber that the Government of the Sudan reiterates its full respect for all the agreements and treaties it has signed with the United Nations to facilitate humanitarian work in Darfur, including with respect to the fast-track provision of emergency relief to those in need. However, we call on the Security Council to address the situation in Darfur in a more comprehensive manner that takes into consideration the fact that the political approach represents the optimal way to resolve the problem. All other aspects — humanitarian, security and even justice — are merely being exploited by some as pretexts for the current action of the ICC. That action now represents the main threat to any political settlement. We are all aware of the statements issued by the various rebel groups following the ICC's decision and the ensuing lack of security and abductions of humanitarian workers providing essential assistance.

The ICC's decision came at a time when the political process was on the verge of bearing fruit. We reiterate our call on the Security Council to assume its responsibilities to work towards the establishment of peace and security in the Sudan, rather than raise new issues and fabricate and inflate new crises in my country. We hope that the Council will act appropriately. We seek its support and assistance, and not further problems or violations in this matter.

Sir John Sawers (United Kingdom): I am grateful for the convening of today's meeting, which is timely given the very widespread concerns that my Government and others have about the future humanitarian situation in the Sudan following recent decisions by the Government of that country.

I should like to begin by thanking the Director of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Mr. Khalikov, for his briefing on the situation in the Sudan as he sees it now. What he said raises substantial concerns in our minds about the prospects for the people in need in the Sudan. It is important to keep in mind that we are talking about the lives of millions of vulnerable people who need our support

and who have been receiving it in recent years. The issues concerning the humanitarian situation should not be mixed up with wider political questions.

The expulsion of the 13 international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the closure of three Sudanese NGOs are completely unacceptable. We join the Secretary-General and the leaders of many United Nations Member States in calling on the Government of the Sudan to reverse its decision. As the Secretary-General has said, expulsions will cause irrevocable damage to humanitarian operations in the Sudan. They also violate both the humanitarian communiqués signed by the Sudan with the United Nations and the provisions of the recent Doha agreement, which the Sudan signed only a few weeks ago.

The representative of the Sudan has said that only 13 out of 118 NGOs have been expelled and claimed that that represents only 7 per cent. The reality, as I think we all know, is that some 40 to 50 per cent of humanitarian capacity in Darfur has now been removed. All but a few of the 237 international staff who used to work for the expelled NGOs in Darfur have left the Sudan. The local staff they have left behind remain vulnerable to duress and are not in a position to sustain the relief operations. Supplies of critical fuel and medicine are not being distributed; nor are new supplies being ordered, putting at risk the populations that the NGOs have been supplying for several years.

In Darfur, within a period of weeks, this will inevitably mean increased risk of disease and malnutrition. The lack of water, food and shelter could increase insecurity, particularly in large, volatile camps such as the Kalma and Muhajariya camps, in southern Darfur. We cannot rule out the possibility of this leading to civil disturbances and mass movements of internally displaced people.

These decisions have consequences beyond Darfur. These could include the displacement of internally displaced people in the Sudan across the border into Chad. The decision to expel these NGOs has an even bigger impact in the southern regions of Blue Nile, Southern Kordofan and Abyie, where the 13 NGOs affected provided the great bulk of humanitarian assistance.

The United Kingdom is the second-largest bilateral donor to the Sudan. We have pledged £36 million to the Common Humanitarian Fund for this year. It is our single largest humanitarian effort anywhere in the world. We remain committed to helping the people of the Sudan. But the actions of the Government of the Sudan have made it harder for us to do so in conformity with internationally accepted principles.

We look forward to receiving the assessment report being prepared by the United Nations and officials of the Government of the Sudan on the impact of the expulsions on the delivery of humanitarian assistance in the Sudan. The Security Council will need to return to this issue when the report is available.

One thing is certain: the United Kingdom will hold the Government of the Sudan responsible for the suffering that its decision causes. The people of Darfur have suffered enough from five years of war. It is inexplicable why their Government would want to add unnecessarily to their misery. We stand ready to work with all concerned to find ways to ensure that vulnerable people in Darfur and other parts of the Sudan continue to receive the humanitarian assistance they desperately need.

Mr. Heller (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation would like to thank Mr. Rashid Khalikov of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) for the information he has provided this afternoon, which itself is justification for the holding of this meeting.

The decision by the Government of the Sudan to halt the operations of the 13 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) concerned, which provide humanitarian assistance in northern Sudan, including in Darfur, is, to say the least, unfortunate. That decision not only inappropriately links the humanitarian situation with a decision by an international tribunal; it also jeopardizes the lives of a considerable number of people and opens the door to a crisis of major proportions by creating obstacles to access for international assistance. That jeopardizes the lives of large parts of the population, in particular those of vulnerable groups such as women and children.

Mexico is also concerned about the safety and security of humanitarian personnel on the ground, given the repeated incidents of intimidation and threats reported by OCHA. Mexico unreservedly condemns those incidents.

In order to address the situation in the Sudan as comprehensively as possible, my delegation urgently calls upon the Government of the Sudan to reverse its decision, allow the return of the non-governmental organizations that have been expelled and facilitate and guarantee adequate access for humanitarian aid and assistance to the civilian population, in line with the norms of international humanitarian law.

Ms. Rice (United States of America): I would like to thank the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (OCHA) for its briefing this afternoon.

We have all just heard a truly troubling report: a depiction of a crisis created by one man that threatens the lives more than one and a half million men, women and children. The United States strongly condemns the Government of Sudan's expulsion of 13 international aid organizations and its closure of three Sudanese aid groups. By expelling aid groups, the Sudanese Government is denying water, food, health care and sanitation to people it drove out of their homes in the first place, thereby exacerbating an already dire humanitarian crisis in Darfur. Let me be clear: this is not a made-up crisis, as the representative of Sudan would have the Council believe. On the contrary, this is a very real and urgent crisis of his Government's own making. President Al-Bashir and his Government are responsible, and must be held accountable, for each and every death caused by these callous and calculated actions. The Sudanese Government made this decision and owns its consequences, which will not only cost lives but leave the Government locked deeper in an isolation of its own making.

Surely, no person of conscience can remain unmoved by the untold misery and death that this cut-off of desperately needed food, water and medicine will inevitably inflict upon millions of innocents already huddled in the camps of Darfur. Surely, we all believe that this body must act on their behalf. And surely, we all believe that we should speak with one voice in the face of such suffering.

We urge the international community to press the Government of Sudan to reverse its expulsion edict and to ensure it does nothing to worsen an already grave situation. President Al-Bashir created this crisis, and he should rectify it immediately. The United States, for its part, is working urgently, closely and intensively with United Nations institutions and other Member States to try to reverse the Government of Sudan's expulsion order. But today the Council heard the Sudanese representative say that his Government would never reverse this order.

The United States believes that Member States and the Council must never stand by idly while over a million people are at imminent risk of death. Time is of the essence. The United Nations has already reported that it has become significantly more difficult to provide food to already malnourished Sudanese children.

We also believe that the new shortfalls in water have made meningitis more widespread in the Jebel Marra area and in the Kalma camp. On top of that, the lack of health care is preventing meningitis patients from receiving proper treatment. When treated, the death rate for those with meningitis can be one in ten or lower. Left untreated, the death rate jumps to one in two. We remain deeply concerned that meningitis and other infectious diseases will continue to spread inside camps and other areas that now lack reliable access to water, food and basic medical services.

We are also facing a growing humanitarian crisis in the Zam Zam camp, in north Darfur. Resources there have already been stretched to the limit, and now the camp is struggling to house more than 36,000 internally displaced people fleeing the recent fighting in south Darfur between rebels and the Government. We urge the Sudanese Government, in close consultation with the United Nations and non-governmental organizations, to address water, housing and other problems at Zam Zam and the other camps across Darfur, before an already dire situation deteriorates any further.

The United States supports the urgent efforts by the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), the World Food Programme and others to provide relief now, including desperately needed clean water. But make no mistake: these efforts cannot even begin to fill the gap left by the expelled aid groups.

With every passing day, President Al-Bashir has used increasingly menacing rhetoric to further escalate the crisis. By doing so, he has jeopardized the safety of the remaining brave men and women from all across the world who provide urgently needed aid to the Sudanese people, and he has further jeopardized the

lives of innocent civilians in the camps, who depend on that aid.

Meanwhile, UNAMID continues to operate under dangerous conditions. The 17 March ambush of UNAMID peacekeepers in South Darfur, which left one of them dead, only underscores the risks they continue to run in Darfur. We offer our deepest condolences to the peacekeeper's family and to the men and women of UNAMID. We reaffirm the commitment of the United States to support them as UNAMID implements its important mandate.

The United States will continue to work closely with the United Nations, humanitarian aid groups and others to relieve the suffering of the people of Darfur. Since 2004, we have provided nearly $4 billion for humanitarian programmes in Sudan and eastern Chad. During fiscal year 2008 and thus far in fiscal year 2009, we have provided nearly $1.25 billion for the people of Sudan.

We continue to be proud of the efforts of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), which has provided more than $720 million in humanitarian aid in Darfur in fiscal year 2008 and thus far in 2009. But, at a stroke, the expulsions eliminated some 54 per cent of USAID's non-food programmes in Darfur, cutting off life-saving efforts to provide health, water and sanitation. The expulsions also eliminated an estimated 40 per cent of the delivery capacity of USAID's main partner in providing food aid in Darfur, the World Food Programme.

We sincerely hope that this body will finally come together as one to protect the people of Darfur. The United States is determined to pursue long-term peace in the Darfur region, ensure that humanitarian aid is delivered and spare innocent civilians from further harm. We urge other members of the Council to join us in this urgent work. There are things upon which we can, and will, disagree. But, surely, saving the lives of desperate and innocent civilians being deliberately deprived of water, food and medicine is not among them. The Government of Sudan created this crisis. It now must act to end it.

Mr. Ripert (France) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I too would like to thank Mr. Khalikov for his briefing on the humanitarian situation in Darfur, which is without doubt one of the world's greatest emergency situations.

I would like to associate myself with those who have condemned the attacks against the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), including the one on 17 March in Nyala, which resulted in the death of a Nigerian Blue Helmet, and the one on 9 March on a UNAMID vehicle in El Geneina, which injured four troops. We hope that Sudanese officials will ensure that the perpetrators of those attacks are arrested. We call upon all Sudanese actors to cooperate fully with UNAMID, which is in the Sudan to maintain peace and assist the most vulnerable. We must ensure that UNAMID's deployment is completed quickly.

I would also like to call on all parties to cooperate in order to prevent a worsening of the humanitarian situation in Darfur. We once again deplore the decision by the Government of the Sudan to suspend the activities of several Sudanese non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and to expel more than a dozen international NGOs that are carrying out crucial humanitarian activities and which have an international reputation for seriousness and impartiality.

Along with the Secretary-General, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and all the countries of the European Union, France hopes that the Sudanese authorities will reverse their decision and refrain for further expulsions. The operations of the NGOs affected by the Government's decision account for more than half of the humanitarian effort in Darfur. As OCHA's representative has indicated, that decision threatens to deprive more than 1 million people of food, health care and drinking water. In that connection, we look forward to the conclusions of the joint assessment currently being carried by OCHA and the Sudanese authorities to more precisely determine all the consequences of that decision that once again puts the people concerned in a situation of unbearable deprivation.

In that regard, I would like to commend UNAMID and the agencies of the United Nations system — including the World Food Programme, UNICEF, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the World Health Organization — who are doing their best to avert an even graver humanitarian tragedy.

We regret the abruptness and speed with which Sudanese Government agencies have implemented the

expulsion order, including harassment and intimidation against NGOs still on the ground. We consider it essential to ensure the protection of the 6,000 people who make up the national staff of the NGOs that have been expelled. Clearly, it is also very important to protect the property of the expelled NGOs.

The continuation of humanitarian efforts in Darfur is essential for the nearly 4 million people who depend upon them, in particular the 2.5 million displaced persons. The challenge is to protect the people of Darfur. That requires that all parties, beginning with Sudanese officials, act responsibly regardless of the circumstances. In that regard, I should like to emphasize the crucial need for all parties to the conflict, including the authorities in Khartoum, to respect the binding norms of international humanitarian law, in particular those relating to humanitarian access to victims and the protection of humanitarian staff.

The issue of humanitarian assistance and the issue of international criminal justice must absolutely be kept apart. France reaffirms its support for international criminal justice and its independence, and reiterates the Sudan's obligation to cooperate with the International Criminal Court, in accordance with resolution 1593 (2005). To punish its own population is certainly not the correct response. As the representative of the Sudan has himself said, we too believe in the value of dialogue and the need to provide a political solution to this crisis. We also believe that combating impunity cannot be delinked from the search for peace in Darfur, or anywhere else in the world. We therefore look forward to our 26 March discussion with Joint Chief Negotiator Bassolé.

Mr. Takasu (Japan): I thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this afternoon's meeting. We are also grateful to the representative of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) for the update on humanitarian situation in the Sudan, and in Darfur in particular.

We note with deep concern the grave humanitarian situation in Darfur, particularly after the decision of the Government of the Sudan to revoke the registration and licences of major humanitarian non-governmental organizations (NGOs). We have already witnessed serious consequences since the previous briefing, on 6 March, including the closing of some medical facilities and a shortage of water in some camps. It is clear that the damage will only increase. We are also concerned about what the food situation will be after the current stockpile is exhausted.

OCHA's briefing has made it abundantly clear that United Nations humanitarian programmes themselves largely rely on those NGOs for the delivery of assistance, and that the United Nations and the remaining NGOs cannot replace the significant loss caused by this decision. NGOs are the implementing partners of the United Nations. It is impossible for the United Nations to compensate for their absence and replace the work that was done by the expelled NGOs. We understand that it is the intention of the Government of the Sudan to increase the presence of national NGOs to replace their work, but that will take a long time to implement, and the most vulnerable affected persons need urgent assistance.

Japan is one of the major donors to the Sudan. On 8 March, just 12 days ago, Japan decided to extend additional assistance, including a contribution of about $34 million, to support the 2009 workplan for the Sudan of the United Nations and its partners. To implement this assistance, we need international and national NGOs as partners. We strongly urge the Government of the Sudan to reconsider its decision.

We are also concerned about the remark by the Government of the Sudan about the so-called Sudanizing of relief operations. Although we are not clear yet about what it means, we cannot envisage implementation of assistance at such a substantial scale without the involvement and monitoring of the United Nations.

The activities of humanitarian NGOs in the Sudan are covered by the Joint Communiqué between the Government and the United Nations on the facilitation of humanitarian activities. The Security Council, in its resolution 1828 (2008), demanded the full implementation of the Joint Communiqué and also that the Government and all armed groups ensure the full, safe and unhindered access of humanitarian organizations and relief personnel. I believe that it is our common responsibility as members of the Security Council to ensure the full implementation of its earlier decisions. If we fail in fulfilling this function, we must be accountable to the international community as to why it is so and who is responsible for inaction.

There is no justification at all for the Government of the Sudan to drastically curtail critical life-saving

food, water and medical support to millions of its own people. Such behaviour would make the least convincing argument for supporting the position of the Government. We appeal to the Government of the Sudan to honour its commitment and act in a responsible manner. We join the Secretary-General in his call to the Government of the Sudan to immediately take necessary actions to alleviate the situation.

The decision of the International Criminal Court will not justify any change in the obligation of the Government of the Sudan to comply with Security Council resolutions, to avoid impeding humanitarian assistance, as referred to in resolution 1828 (2008), and to ensure the safety and security of civilians and United Nations personnel. It is important that the Government of the Sudan and all rebel movements refrain from any action that would aggravate the humanitarian and security situation on the ground.

The Security Council should continue to monitor carefully future developments, including the peace process, the deployment of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur, the humanitarian and security situation and the question of impunity. The most important thing for us is that the Council members make the utmost effort to address the issue responsibly and to act in unison as much as possible.

We are carefully following the joint assessments by the United Nations and the Government of the Sudan of humanitarian needs in Darfur. We very much look forward to receiving a briefing on the outcome of the assessment next week.

Mr. Mayr-Harting (Austria): Like others, I would like to thank Mr. Rashid Khalikov for updating us on the humanitarian situation in the Sudan.

The continued delivery of humanitarian assistance in the Sudan is vital to the survival of a significant part of the population of Darfur. Austria is therefore deeply concerned by the decision of the Government of the Sudan to expel 13 international humanitarian non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and to revoke the licenses of three Sudanese NGOS. We are also gravely concerned by recent reports that the Sudanese Government has called for all international aid groups to leave the Sudan within one year. We have already heard — and the point has already been made — that the aid organizations affected by these decisions are responsible for some 40 to 50 per cent of the aid provided to Darfur. These organizations therefore provide an indispensable lifeline to many Sudanese civilians.

The point has already been made that over 1 million civilians are immediately affected by the decision to expel these NGOs. The United Nations depends on the NGOs as its partners. The expulsions leave behind life-threatening gaps in assistance for the population in Darfur, particularly at a time when there have been outbreaks of meningitis in Southern Darfur, including in Kalma camp. Over time, the impact of the expulsion of NGOs will be dramatic in such fields as water and sanitation, health care and food distribution. The loss of these vital aid services could lead to a serious deterioration of the humanitarian situation and to greater population movements throughout Darfur and across the border to Chad.

In accordance with the call made by the European Union just a few days ago, we therefore appeal to the Government of the Sudan to urgently reconsider its decision and to ensure that humanitarian assistance to all people in need in the Sudan be guaranteed. We are also sure that the United Nations will do everything in its power to fill some of the gaps left behind by the expelled NGOs, but we know that it is not possible at this point for the Organization, as the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has made clear, to fill all these gaps. In this situation, we believe that it is essential to recall that it is the Government of the Sudan that has the primary responsibility to ensure the provision of basic services, in particular food, shelter and health care, for its civilian population.

Other speakers have already referred to the number of attacks on peacekeeping personnel and humanitarian workers and to incidents of banditry that have greatly increased in recent times. All parties to the conflict need to show restraint in the current situation. All sides must abide by their obligation to protect the civilian population under applicable rules of human rights and international humanitarian law. As far as the Government of the Sudan is concerned, we expect it to ensure the safety and security of all United Nations personnel and humanitarian workers and to refrain from any form of intimidation towards the human rights community in the Sudan.

Mr. Liu Zhenmin (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): We thank Mr. Rashid Khalikov, Director of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), for his briefing today. China has closely followed the

humanitarian situation in Darfur. We look forward to the report to be submitted by the joint OCHA-Government of the Sudan assessment teams, which will give us a better understanding of the overall humanitarian situation in Darfur. It is our hope that the parties concerned will work together to seek and achieve an early resolution of the crisis and thereby ensure the unimpeded provision of humanitarian assistance to Darfur.

The issue of Darfur is multifaceted and complex. It encompasses such areas as the political process, the deployment of peacekeepers, humanitarian relief, justice and economic reconstruction. All activities in these fields are inextricably interrelated. Recent events have shown that the issuance by the International Criminal Court of an arrest warrant for the Sudanese President has already adversely affected the situation in Darfur. It is our hope that the parties concerned will exercise restraint in order to prevent the escalation of tensions and avoid a further negative impact on the political process, the deployment of peacekeepers and the provision of humanitarian assistance in Darfur.

We maintain that the Security Council should have a comprehensive discussion of the issue of Darfur in order to develop an integrated strategy and to advance in a balanced manner in its work to find a comprehensive solution to the issue.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Today's meeting of the Security Council is very symptomatic. It was convened in haste and without due preparation, and underscores the absence of a coordinated strategy on Darfur on the part of the international community and the Security Council that would assiduously address the political solution, peacekeeping and the search for justice. If what we are witnessing here is the expression of a certain policy, it is a dangerous one that will, unfortunately, lead first and foremost to the suffering of the people of Darfur and other regions of the Sudan.

We warmly welcome the efforts of the humanitarian organizations and the United Nations in Darfur to provide humanitarian assistance to civilians who have suffered as a result of the conflict. As a result of those efforts, we have been able to save thousands of lives in Darfur. We believe that we should continue dialogue with the Government of the Sudan regarding activities of international non-governmental agencies on that country's territory.

We await an additional detailed assessment of the situation in the country following the visit of the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Mr. Holmes. All necessary humanitarian assistance must be provided to the population of Darfur. The complex humanitarian situation in Darfur is caused by the armed confrontation between the Darfur opposition and the Government of the Sudan, banditry and the violence resulting from the actions of armed groups.

It is necessary to ensure that the parties to the conflict pursue all efforts to stabilize the situation. Normalizing the humanitarian situation will be impossible without a conclusive political solution backed by the peacekeeping efforts of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur. That is an integrated way to resolve the Darfur crisis, and the international community must work together to promote it.

Mr. Kafando (Burkina Faso) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, we would like thank the Director of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs for the briefing that he has just given us. When the need for a debate on the humanitarian situation in the Sudan arose, we saw no objection to it, aware as we are of the difficult humanitarian situation currently prevailing in Darfur and of the need to find a rapid solution to it.

However, in order to take full stock of the realities in the field, we felt that it would have been better to wait until next week for a comprehensive assessment of the difficulties of humanitarian assistance in Darfur on the basis of the reliable information that we await from the assessment mission, including that which the Joint Chief Mediator, who is shortly expected in New York, could give us. We hope that those joint assessments will enable us to envisage the most appropriate solutions to address the current difficulties.

The lessons that we draw once again from the humanitarian situation in Darfur are that the concern to do justice must not create further suffering for the civilian population. We must recognize that the deplorable situation cannot be separated from the decision of the International Criminal Court to prosecute the President of the Sudan.

For its part, the Government of Burkina Faso, which deeply deplores the expulsion of the non-governmental organizations by the Sudanese authorities, will continue to encourage and to urge the

Government of the Sudan to find the ways and means to satisfactorily respond to the humanitarian situation in Darfur. We can affirm that contacts continue in that direction, and of course we hope that they will be successful. The main issue is to restore confidence between the Sudan authorities and humanitarian actors to alleviate the suffering of the population of Darfur.

Mr. Rugunda (Uganda): I join my colleagues in thanking Mr. Khalikov for the briefing that he has given on behalf of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. It is also good that a representative of the Government of the Sudan is present to give us the Sudan's point of view.

The humanitarian situation in the Sudan is clearly very grave, given many years of strife and conflict, a difficult terrain, an environment with an already weak social infrastructure; and a situation that has been further complicated by the recent indictment of President Al-Bashir. That has obviously focused his and his Government's attention more on the issue of the indictment and hence less on the humanitarian crisis facing the country.

While that is going on, the situation has been further worsened by the recent expulsion of the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that were heavily involved in humanitarian work in the Sudan. It is true that, because of the many years of strife, many have been crowded into camps. When many people are crowded into camps, the chances of the spread of disease increase and hence mortality among children, in particular, and among other vulnerable groups heavily increases. It is therefore no wonder that we are now seeing more deaths from meningitis, malnutrition, dehydration and simple diseases that would have otherwise been treated if we had reasonable medical services on the ground.

I do not share the view of my colleague from the Sudan that because only 13 NGOs have been expelled — and that therefore only 7 per cent of the NGO community has been affected — it is a negligible matter. What we know is that the NGOs affected are well known, big international organizations whose capacity and effectiveness have been very well tested in many trying situations. Thus, the fact that only 13 may have been expelled does not mean that their contribution is small. In fact, we have received information that the expulsion may have affected 50 to 60 per cent of the humanitarian work that is going on.

Because of that difficult situation, I call on the Government of the Sudan, in the interests of its own people, who have suffered many, many years of war and deprivation, to take urgent action to review the decision to expel those humanitarian agencies in order to ensure that the people who are in the camps, who are on the ground and who are suffering have access to water, food and basic health services.

I agree that we will have a more comprehensive discussion of this matter next week. Nevertheless, the principle of being kept regularly informed of the humanitarian situation in the Sudan is welcome, and I would like to call on my colleagues in the Sudan and the Government of the Sudan to be responsive to the concerns of the international community, which are also the concerns of the people of the Sudan.

Mr. Jurica (Croatia): First of all, let me thank Mr. Rashid Khalikov once again for his briefing on the grave humanitarian situation on the ground in Darfur. Yet again and after only a short period of time, we are meeting to hear about things going from bad to worse in Darfur. After hearing the news about four peacekeepers being wounded near El Geneina last week, now we are also informed of a peacekeeper's death near Nyala. All of this is taking place in the midst of the latest humanitarian crisis created by the Government of the Sudan, which happened when they decided to expel 13 major foreign aid agencies and three Sudanese agencies, leaving more than 1 million people out in the open, vulnerable to hunger, disease and other perils. This is completely unacceptable.

Moreover, we fear that this could lead to further difficulties in neighbouring Chad by causing a possible fresh influx of refugees from Darfur. We keenly await the assessment reports from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs which we expect to be presented next week.

Again, instead of opting for a political solution and working with the international community on finding long-lasting solutions for a sustainable peace, Mr. Al-Bashir and his Government, regrettably, did not heed the calls for peace, instead opting for a worsening of the already destabilized situation.

The Government of the Sudan has a responsibility to protect not only its people but also the international peacekeepers and humanitarian workers who are in the Sudan to help the people of the Sudan. There must be accountability for gross violations of

international humanitarian law, and impunity cannot be tolerated. The Government of the Sudan must revoke its inhumane and unacceptable decision.

Mr. İlkin (Turkey): We thank the Secretariat for its interim briefing on the humanitarian situation in Darfur.

Like all other members of the Council and of the international community, Turkey is concerned about the humanitarian situation in that troubled region. Owing to circumstances not of their own making, millions of innocent people in Darfur have been displaced and are in constant need of humanitarian aid in almost every conceivable form. That is a huge undertaking, and one that must continue unhindered as delays and disruptions in the effective flow of humanitarian aid can potentially have very serious consequences.

That is why Turkey believes that we must all continue to urge the Sudanese Government to reinstate the licences of the non-governmental organizations in question. We very much hope that this can be possible without any delay, for the present situation is extremely grave and cannot wait. Meanwhile, as we discussed during our most recent consultations on this subject, the Secretariat must have developed a plan that addresses the critical question of how the gap that has been created by the decision of the Sudanese Government can be filled in the short term. In that regard, we look forward to receiving a comprehensive briefing from the Secretariat with more precise information and recommendations, once the joint assessment that is ongoing between the United Nations and the Sudanese authorities is completed. Turkey believes that the Council will be in a better position to appraise the evolving humanitarian situation in Darfur once all the information from the Secretariat team on the ground has been received and analysed.

Turkey places great emphasis on the humanitarian dimension of the Darfur crisis. For its part, Turkey extends significant bilateral and multilateral humanitarian assistance to the Sudanese people, and we will continue to do so. We will also continue to support the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur and the United Nations Mission in the Sudan in every way we can.

We must also accept the fact that the humanitarian situation cannot realistically be decoupled from the political and regional realities. As we have said on a number of occasions before, the Council must be able to take a holistic and strategic approach to this very sensitive question. We have to be able to address all the dynamics that are in play. Thus, we look forward to our meeting with the Joint Chief Negotiator, Mr. Bassolé, next week.

Mr. Le Luong Minh (Viet Nam): We thank Mr. Rashid Khalikov of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs for his briefing.

We are concerned about the worsening humanitarian situation and rising security threats in Darfur, in the Sudan. In conflict areas, civilians become the most vulnerable group, whether in Afghanistan, Gaza, the Democratic Republic of the Congo or elsewhere. Viet Nam has always maintained that the protection of civilians and their livelihood must be a priority that all parties concerned must take into careful consideration.

While the fact that 13 non-governmental organizations operating in the Sudan have to leave the country is regrettable, it cannot be denied that the deterioration of the humanitarian situation and the political process in Darfur and in the Sudan in general, has come about as a result of the decision of the International Criminal Court to indict the President of the Sudan. In the course of the Council's deliberations on the Sudan situation in general, and that of Darfur in particular, Viet Nam, together with many other delegations, reflecting the view of many United Nations Member States, has warned the Council about this unfortunate, but otherwise well-predicted, negative development.

Viet Nam has been a consistent and strong supporter of the struggle against impunity. We have always maintained that those committing crimes, especially the most serious crimes such as the crime of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity, must be duly punished — rather sooner than later. At the same time, concerning the situation in the Sudan in general and in Darfur in particular, we have pointed to the need to maintain a balance between promoting the political process and waging the fight against impunity, in the interest of long-term peace and security for the Sudan and for Darfur and in the interest of the very survival and livelihood of millions of Sudanese, including those in Darfur, suffering as a result of the protracted hostilities and the worsening humanitarian situation.

In the face of the worsening situation, we call upon all parties concerned to exercise restraint and refrain from any action that may lead to further complications. We call upon them to cooperate to improve the humanitarian situation; ensure the safety of the civilian population, personnel of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur and United Nations staff, as well as those doing lofty humanitarian work in the country; and resume the peace process, with a view to achieving a comprehensive political solution to the issue of the Sudan and Darfur, in the best interest of the people of the Sudan and Darfur, and of peace and stability in the region.

Mr. Urbina (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): I too wish to thank Mr. Rashid Khalikov for his briefing this afternoon.

My country welcomes the convening of this meeting. We are not seeking to punish a regime that is sinking in its own errors and needs no one's help to do so. The only purpose of this meeting is to ensure visibility for a humanitarian crisis of great magnitude — for a humanitarian situation that is endangering the health and very lives of hundreds of thousands of human beings. Through this meeting we are calling upon the international community and upon world public opinion to mobilize in order to prevent the future growth of what is already a significant crisis and the future implications of actions taken in response to judicial circumstances that have nothing whatsoever to do with the lives of these hundreds of thousands of people, whose very existence is now under threat.

The magnitude of the crisis has yet to be seen, thanks to the effectiveness of the efforts of the humanitarian organizations that have now been expelled. Tomorrow, malnutrition, hunger, disease and the deaths of many of these people will bring home to us the true scope of this crisis.

On 8 March, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs estimated that 1.5 million people no longer had access to food or health services; that drinking water, basic sanitation and hygiene services would no longer be provided to 1.16 million; that food would no longer be distributed to 1.1 million; and that 4,000 children would no longer receive assistance to address malnutrition.

The expulsion of 13 humanitarian organizations that were providing services in the country has paved the way for a great collective tragedy through the intentional abandonment of many people. Preventing those people's access to humanitarian assistance could result in their deaths, which could constitute another violation of international humanitarian law. The Sudan must remember that it is obliged to protect its population, that it must honour the commitments it has made and that it must consider revoking the decision to expel international humanitarian organizations. The Sudanization of relief is not credible. Replacing the assistance provided by nearly 8,000 humanitarian workers organized to do so is no easy task.

Finally, I am grateful for the efforts of the United Nations, the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur and the World Food Programme, which are exploring ways to meet the urgent humanitarian needs in the Sudan and to prevent further damage.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and Chairperson of the African Union.

We would have preferred to defer the briefing by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) until the completion of the joint missions carried out by the Government of the Sudan and the United Nations to assess the humanitarian situation in Darfur, so that we might have a fuller picture of the situation. Furthermore, if the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs were here, all delegations would have had the opportunity to ask him questions and receive direct responses. We also wish that those Council members who insisted that this meeting be held had been as enthusiastic and persistent when aircraft were bombing civilians in Gaza, who were deprived of food and medicine as a result of a blockade during that aggression and for as long as two years before it.

My country, as a neighbour of the Sudan and as current Chair of the African Union, is closely following developments in the humanitarian situation in Darfur. While we regret the decision by the Government of the Sudan to expel a number of humanitarian organizations, we understand the circumstances in which that decision was made. We realize the importance of cooperation in Darfur among the United Nations, the Government of the Sudan, the African Union, the African Union-United Nations Hybrid

Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) and the League of Arab States to facilitate the safe and unhindered delivery of humanitarian assistance to those in need. We hope that the Government's decision, which has caused a number of humanitarian organizations to suspend their activities, will not affect the people and that those organizations will be replaced by others — possibly national ones — as soon as possible. We are confident that the Government will take care of its people in Darfur, who are Sudanese citizens, not — as some here are attempting to imply — citizens of any member of the Council.

Like others, we are awaiting the results of the joint assessment missions by the United Nations and the Government of the Sudan, and we hope that we will receive their report as soon as possible. Regrettably, OCHA itself, which we had hoped would be represented at today's meeting, is also awaiting those results. We believe that the Government's decision concerning a number of humanitarian organizations is one of the expected negative effects of the decision by the International Criminal Court to issue an arrest warrant against Sudanese President Omer Al-Bashir. We cannot separate the two issues, and we have no doubt that the Court's decision has created a new reality in the Sudan. As we have stated before, imposing the Court's procedures at the expense of the peace process will neither do justice nor put an end to the conflict in Darfur; however, it could threaten the stability of the Sudan and the entire region and undermine the whole political process, both in Darfur and in South Sudan.

While that does not mean that we do not want those responsible for crimes to be brought to justice, we believe it is essential to create an atmosphere conducive to achieving peace. Rather than taking measures such as the Court's decision, which, under the pretext of doing justice, could complicate peace efforts and increase instability, we merely seek to support the political process through other means. That is what why the African Union, a major partner of the United Nations, has taken a number of decisions — including, most recently, at its summit in Addis Ababa — highlighting the need to invoke article 16 of the Rome Statute.

Regrettably, the Council has yet to respond to those and other decisions taken at the regional level, including by the League of Arab States. The Sudan needs international efforts that are in consonance with — and not in contradiction of — its national efforts and the efforts of the African Union to avert the negative effects of the lack of security and the current instability in the country.

We do not believe that the Security Council needs more affirmations of the possible negative consequences for the stability of Sudan. Does it need more evidence of the repercussions that the decision of the Pre-Trial Chamber of the International Criminal Court has had? We have all heard the statements by certain rebel groups in the Sudan. They in themselves constitute a warning to us here in the Security Council.

It is indeed urgent that the Security Council respond to the various national and regional concerns and act to invoke article 16 of the Rome Statute in response to the decision of the African Union that was adopted at its most recent summit and the recent decision of the League of Arab States.

We know that the relations of some members of this Council with the Sudan are tense. This is quite normal in international relations and indeed acceptable, but what is neither natural nor normal is that the Security Council be used as a forum to settle accounts with the Government of the Sudan or any other Government. The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya calls on all member States to refrain from such actions so that they do not further damage the credibility of this Council.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council. The next speaker is the representative of the Czech Republic, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Kaiser (Czech Republic): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU). First of all, I would like to thank Mr. Rashid Khalikov of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs for his comprehensive briefing.

Allow me to inform the Council that on 16 March, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the European Union met in Brussels and adopted conclusions in which they called upon the Government of the Sudan to urgently reconsider its decision to expel 13 international humanitarian non-governmental organizations (NGOs)and revoke the licences of three local NGOs. The Ministers also called on the Government of the Sudan to ensure that humanitarian assistance to the most vulnerable people in the Sudan be continuously guaranteed, guided by the principles of human rights and international humanitarian law.

Moreover, the Ministers recalled the declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union. In this declaration, the EU expresses its belief that the continued delivery of humanitarian assistance to the Sudan is of the highest importance to saving lives and is crucial to creating an environment conducive to the implementation of all peace processes in the Sudan, which the European Union will continue to support strongly.

The decision by the Government of the Sudan to expel 13 international NGOs from the Sudan and to revoke the licences of three local NGOs is a direct and immediate threat to the continuity of international humanitarian assistance in Darfur and damages eight operations in the rest of the northern Sudan. These NGOs provide a vital service to millions of vulnerable Sudanese civilians, guided by the principles of human rights and international humanitarian law.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): The representative of the Sudan has asked for the floor once again, and I now give him the floor.

Mr. Hassan (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): I asked for the floor to very briefly clarify a few facts regarding, first, the incomplete description of the situation in Darfur and the Sudan in general. Such a description will neither advance political settlement nor help our people in Darfur, the people of the Sudan in general or the continent as a whole. Talking about the Sudan and its leadership as if decisions are being taken by an individual is a flagrant violation of diplomatic norms and indeed a deviation from the Charter of this Organization.

Decisions in the Sudan are taken by institutions. The Sudan is not a failed State. It is a country that has institutions, and the competent institutions responsible for non-governmental organizations in the Sudan carefully studied the situation and made their decision after having obtained evidence that established beyond a reasonable doubt that those organizations had crossed the line, as my colleague stated earlier.

We expected this Council to deliberate today on the extent to which those non-governmental organizations violated the resolutions of the General Assembly that regulate humanitarian work, most notably resolution 46/182 of 19 December 1991. This Council knows that encroaching on the sovereignty of Member States is a violation of the Charter. That is the first issue.

The second issue is that the statements of all the member States here reached one conclusion. All of them are waiting for the conclusion of the joint evaluation mission, which is composed of representatives of the United Nations and the Sudan and is still conducting its investigation in Darfur. What, then, is behind all this hurry and commotion? Why is the Council meeting today, before the relevant committee comes back with its report? We can only deduce that the non-governmental organizations that are the source of all this commotion are not normal organizations. These are organizations that have crossed the line, and this is the irrevocable decision of the Government of the Sudan.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 4.50 p.m.